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## Mattis leaving as Pentagon chief after clashes with Trump

By ZEKE MILLER and LOLITA BALDOR

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Jim Mattis abruptly said he was resigning Thursday, a day after President Donald Trump overruled his advice against pulling troops out of Syria and pressed forward on discussions to withdraw forces from Afghanistan. Mattis, perhaps the most respected foreign policy official in Trump's administration, will leave by the end of February after two tumultuous years struggling to soften and moderate the president's hardline and sometimes sharply changing policies.



In this Sept. 21, 2018, file photo, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis speaks during the 2018 POW/MIA National Recognition Day Ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington.

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Associated Press

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# Kushners buying 4th New Jersey property in tax-break zone

By **BERNARD CONDON**

AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Jared Kushner's family company is buying another property in a New Jersey beach town where developers can get big tax breaks thanks to a new federal program pushed by Kushner and his wife, Ivanka Trump.

The Kushner Cos. is negotiating to buy land already approved for retail space and apartments in one of thousands of new Opportunity Zones offering tax breaks around the country, Long Branch Business Administrator George Jackson said Thursday. It would be the fourth Kushner purchase in an Opportunity Zone in the town since the program was included in the Republican-led tax overhaul law passed in December last year.

The program has been praised as a smart way to attract money into high-poverty areas long neglected by private investors. But critics say it includes too many gentrifying neighborhoods already attracting investment and



In this Aug. 29, 2018, file photo, White House Adviser Jared Kushner waves as he arrives at the Office of the United States Trade Representative in Washington.

Associated Press

is a giveaway to wealthy developers. The Kushner Cos. did not respond to repeated requests for comment. An earlier report in the Asbury Park Press on the deal quotes a Kushner spokeswoman saying the purchase is "under contract."

News of the possible purchase follows an Associated Press investigation that showed Jared Kushner owns stakes in 13 Opportunity Zones properties, all in locations deemed by the Urban Institute in Washington to be showing indica-

tions of rapid change or full-out gentrification, including ones in Long Branch. Six of properties are in New York City's Brooklyn Heights neighborhood overlooking the Manhattan skyline and where apartments sell for millions each.

The Kushner Cos. has given no indication that it plans take advantage of the tax breaks for its properties. Under the law, it is difficult for developers to get the breaks if their properties were bought before the law was passed, though there are ways around the

requirement.

The AP investigation uncovered no evidence that Jared Kushner or Ivanka Trump influenced the choice of the zones. In the end, 8,700 zones were approved by the Treasury Department earlier this year from a list submitted by state governors.

But ethics experts say the couple's push for the program in Washington raises conflict-of-interest issues nonetheless. Property values have been rising in zones since the law was passed, a possible benefit to the Kushners even if they do not take advantage of the tax breaks.

Jared Kushner also could benefit from an ownership stake in Cadre, a real estate investment company that he co-founded. It recently announced it is launching a series of funds to invest in Opportunity Zones projects.

Kushner's stake in Cadre is worth at least \$25 million, according to a financial disclosure report filed with the federal government earlier this year.

Long Branch's Jackson said the current owner of the land, Long Branch Partners, has already demolished empty buildings on the plot and received approval from the city council and planning board to go ahead with plans to build stores and apartments and parking spaces there. He said the Kushners told him they plan to adopt the current owner's plan.

A website for the owner, a division of Diversified Realty Advisors of Montville, New Jersey, says the company envisions about 800 apartments on the 10-acre plot. The company did not respond to requests for comment.

Under the Opportunity Zone program, developers who put capital gains from stock sales and other investments into zone properties and businesses can defer federal taxes on capital gains up to 2026, then get a big discount when their bill comes due. And any gains from new zone investments that are held onto for at least 10 years won't be taxed at all. □



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**MATTIS LEAVING**

Continued from Front

He told Trump in a letter that he was leaving because "you have a right to have a Secretary of Defense whose views are better aligned with yours."

Trump said in a tweet that Mattis was retiring, but that's not what Mattis said. The announcement came a day after Trump surprised U.S. allies and members of Congress by announcing the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Syria, and as he continues to consider shrinking the American deployment in Afghanistan. Trump's decision to pull troops out of Syria has been sharply criticized for abandoning America's Kurdish allies, who may well face a Turkish assault once U.S. troops leave, and had been staunchly opposed by the Pentagon.

Mattis, in his resignation letter, emphasized the importance of standing up for U.S. allies — an implicit criticism of the president's decision on this issue and others.

"While the U.S. remains the indispensable nation in the free world, we cannot protect our interests or serve that role effectively without maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies," Mattis wrote.

His departure was quickly lamented by foreign policy hands on both sides of the aisle, who viewed him as a sober voice of experience in the ear of a president who had never before held political office or served in the military.

Last year, Republican Sen. Bob Corker — a frequent Trump critic — said Mattis, along with White House chief of staff John Kelly and then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, were helping "separate our country from chaos."

Tillerson was fired early this year. Kelly is to leave the

White House in the coming days.

"This is scary," reacted Senate Intelligence committee Vice Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va., on Twitter. "Secretary Mattis has been an island of stability amidst the chaos of the Trump administration."

Mattis' departure has long been rumored, but officials close to him have insisted that the battle-hardened retired Marine would hang on, determined to bring military calm and reason to the administration's often chaotic national security decisions and soften some of Trump's sharper tones with allies.

Opponents of Mattis, however, have seen him as an unwanted check on Trump. A White House official said Mattis informed Trump of his decision to leave the administration Thursday afternoon. Trump said a replacement would be chosen soon.

At the start of the Trump administration, the president had gushed about his respect for Mattis, repeatedly calling him "Mad Dog," despite Mattis' own public insistence that the moniker was never his. Instead, his nickname for years was CHAOS, which stood for "Colonel Has An Outstanding Suggestion," and reflected Mattis' more cerebral nature.

The two quickly clashed on major policy decisions.

During his first conversations with Trump about the Pentagon job, Mattis made it clear that he disagreed with his new boss in two areas: He said torture doesn't work, despite Trump's assertion during the campaign that it did, and he voiced staunch support for traditional U.S. international alliances, including NATO, which Trump repeatedly criticized.

Mattis was credited by some in the administration

for blocking an executive order that would have reopened CIA interrogation "black sites." Trump has said the Pentagon chief convinced him it wasn't necessary to bring back banned torture techniques like waterboarding.

En route to his first visit to Iraq as defense secretary, Mattis bluntly rebuffed Trump's assertion that America might take Iraqi oil as compensation for U.S. efforts in the war-torn country. □



In this Nov. 9, 2018, file photo, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis waits outside the Pentagon.

Associated Press



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# Whitaker rejected advice to recuse from Russia probe

By MICHAEL BALSAMO  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker chose not to recuse himself from the Russia investigation even though a top Justice Department ethics official advised him to step aside out of an "abundance of caution," a senior official said Thursday.

Whitaker's past criticism of the Russia investigation has raised questions about whether he can oversee it fairly. The ethics official said this week that a recusal was "a close call," but suggested that Whitaker remove himself, even though he was not required to do so.

Whitaker decided not to take the advice.

Earlier Thursday, a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss it publicly told The Associated Press that Whitaker did not have to recuse himself from overseeing the probe, but that wasn't the full picture.

Later, a senior Justice Department official provided



In this Nov. 21, 2018 photo, Acting Attorney General Matthew Whitaker, framed by a photograph of lower Manhattan, addresses law enforcement officials at the Joint Terrorism Task Force in New York.

a much more detailed account of the ethics consultation. It showed that although Whitaker was not required to step aside from the investigation, the issue wasn't so clear-cut. That official would discuss the matter with reporters only on condition of anonymity.

Members of Congress have expressed concerns about Whitaker's past criticism of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. The probe is looking at Russian interference in the 2016 election and ties to President Donald Trump's campaign. The investiga-

tion had been overseen by Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein until Trump ousted Jeff Sessions as attorney general last month and appointed Whitaker. The senior official said Rosenstein continues to have day-to-day oversight of the probe.

The official said that after Whitaker was appointed, he formed a group of four Justice Department officials — led by a veteran U.S. attorney — to advise him on the transition and ethics process. That small group of officials met repeatedly with the Justice Department's career ethics officials.

Whitaker met with the ethics officials three times in the last six weeks, the senior official said. During one of those meetings the officials asked Whitaker about the comments he made as a legal commentator for CNN about his views of the Mueller investigation. The remarks were made before he joined the Justice Department.

Whitaker had once opined about a scenario in which Trump could fire Sessions and then appoint an acting attorney general who could stifle the funding of Mueller's probe. His other past public statements have included an op-ed article in which he said

Mueller would be straying outside his mandate if he investigated Trump's family finances. In a talk radio interview, Whitaker maintained there was no evidence of collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign during the 2016 election.

Whitaker was not required to solicit a recommendation from ethics officials and it was at Whitaker's discretion whether he should recuse, the senior official said. Ethics officials had also told Whitaker's advisers that they had no precedent of another attorney general recusing themselves because of a perceived conflict.

Since taking office, Whitaker has not been briefed on specific developments of the special counsel's investigation and Rosenstein will continue to maintain day-to-day oversight for the foreseeable future, the official added.

However, the official said Whitaker can be briefed as the investigation moves forward, though there isn't a set timetable yet on when that might begin.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., who will take over as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee in January, said it was "unacceptable" that Whitaker didn't inform members of Congress about his decision not to recuse himself and vowed to question Whitaker before the committee.

"More concerning, at the moment, is the fact that career DOJ ethics officials appear to have had serious concerns about Mr. Whitaker's ability and fitness to oversee the Special Counsel's investigation," Nadler said in a statement. The Justice Department is planning to send a letter to Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer about Whitaker's recusal decision and the ethics process later Thursday. The question of whether an attorney general can or should recuse from a particular criminal investigation has long been politically fraught, and decisions in both directions have had far-reaching ramifications. □

Associated Press

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## State audit slams San Diego response to hepatitis A outbreak

By JULIE WATSON  
Associated Press

**SAN DIEGO (AP)** — The city and county of San Diego failed to quickly recognize and control a Hepatitis A outbreak that grew into one of the largest in recent history, killing 20 and sending nearly 400 to hospitals, according to a state audit released Thursday.

The county lacked a concrete hepatitis A prevention plan that led to a delay in getting the most vulnerable residents vaccinated, and mass vaccinations did not happen until after a health emergency had been declared, according to the audit conducted by the state auditor at the request of lawmakers.

The disease killed 20 people, most of them homeless. More than 580 were infected, and nearly 400 people were hospitalized. The city was also slow to respond, according to the audit. Six months into the outbreak, the city began power-washing streets and installing hand-washing stations and public restrooms downtown, where streets were lined with tents of homeless people.

Hepatitis A is a highly contagious liver disease spread through dirty hands and other contact.

Mike McConnell, an advocate for San Diego's homeless population, said the more he read the audit, "the more angry I got." He said officials did not act until an affluent resident went to the county board of supervisors after getting infected and expressed his concern, and then reports of the outbreak began to affect San Diego's tourism industry.

"There was just negligence,"

he said. "Because the people being impacted were homeless people, there was not the same sense of urgency."

The county did not share enough information with the city when the outbreak was detected in March 2017, causing the city to not fully recognize the seriousness of what was happening and delaying its response, the audit found.

If the county had administered mass vaccinations sooner, the outbreak might not have grown to as large as it did, the audit found.

The number of new cases tripled to about 20 cases per week from May through September 2017, compared with six new cases per week during March 2017.

More vaccinations were administered in September 2017 than in the previous six months combined, and the effort led to a decline in new cases, the audit found. The county declared the outbreak over in October after 100 days passed with no new cases.

The auditor said lawmakers should enact legislation requiring local health officers to promptly notify local public entities within their jurisdictions about outbreaks that may affect them and provide the locations of where cases are concentrated, the number of residents affected, and the measures that should be taken.

The California Department of Public Health also should amend its disease outbreak response plan to include asking jurisdictions to set vaccination targets, establish dates to meet those targets, and determine needed resources, the re-

port said.

San Diego city government officials "agree with the recommendations, particularly that the city and county should strengthen their relationship as it relates to responding to regional emergencies," said city chief operating officer Kris Michell.



In this Sept. 28, 2017 file photo a man passes behind a sign warning of an upcoming street cleaning in San Diego.

Associated Press

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## APNewsBreak: U.S. miscalculated benefits of oil train brakes

By **MATTHEW BROWN**

Associated Press

**BILLINGS, Mont. (AP)** —

The Trump administration miscalculated potential damages from train derailments when it canceled an Obama-era rule requiring the installation of more advanced brakes by railroads hauling explosive fuels, The Associated Press has found. A government analysis used by the administration to justify the cancellation omitted up to \$117 million in estimated future damages that could be avoided by using electronic brakes. The error could stoke renewed criticism from supporters of the rule who say the analysis was biased.

Department of Transportation officials acknowledged the mistake after it was discovered by the AP during a review of federal documents, but said it does not change their decision not to install the brakes.

Safety advocates, transportation union leaders and Democratic lawmakers oppose the administration's decision to kill the brake rule, which was included in a package of rail safety measures enacted in 2015 under President Barack Obama following dozens of accidents by trains hauling oil and ethanol in the U.S. and Canada. The deadliest happened in Canada in 2013, when an unattended train carrying crude oil rolled down an incline, came off the tracks in the town of Lac-Mégantic and exploded into a massive ball of fire, killing 47 people and obliterating much of the Que-



In this Nov. 8, 2013 file photo, a tanker train carrying crude oil burns after derailing in western Alabama outside Aliceville, Ala.

Associated Press

bec community's downtown. There have been other fiery crashes and fuel spills in Alabama, Oregon, Montana, Virginia, West Virginia, North Dakota and Illinois.

After the brake rule was enacted, lobbyists for the railroad and oil industries pushed to cancel it, citing the high cost of installing so-called electronic pneumatic brakes and questioning their effectiveness.

Unlike other systems where brakes are applied sequentially along the length of a train, electronic pneumatic brakes, or ECP, work on all cars simultaneously. That can reduce the distance and time a train needs to stop, and cause fewer cars to derail.

"These ECP brakes are very important for oil trains," said Steven Ditmeyer, a rail safety expert and former senior official at the Federal Railroad Administration. "It makes a great deal of sense: All the brakes get applied immediately, and there would be fewer cars in the pileup."

Under Obama, the Transportation Department determined the brakes would cost up to \$664 million over 20 years and save between \$470 million and \$1.1 billion from accidents that would be avoided.

The Trump administration reduced the range of benefits to between \$131 million and \$374 million. Transportation department economists said in their

analysis that the change was prompted in part by a reduction in oil train traffic in recent years, which meant there would be fewer derailments.

The transport of crude on U.S. railroads peaked in 2014 when 540,000 tank cars shipped. That fell to about 210,000 carloads last year, most of it from the Bakken oil patch of North Dakota and Montana, according to industry figures. But in making their calculations, the economists left out the most common type of derailments in which spilled and burning fuel causes property damage but no mass casualties, the AP found. Equipping fuel trains with electronic brakes would reduce damages

from those derailments by an estimated \$48 million to \$117 million, according to Department of Transportation estimates that were left out of the administration's final tally.

Including the omitted benefits reduces the net cost of the requirement to as low as \$63 million under one scenario laid out by the agency.

Transportation spokesman Bobby Fraser said the omission was unintentional and would not have changed September's decision to cancel the electronic brake requirement. Under the administration's analysis, the cost of the brakes would have outweighed the benefits even when considering estimated damages from derailments that were left out of the original findings.

However, excluding those potential damages means the difference between costs and benefits would have been much narrower. A 2015 act of Congress mandated that the Department of Transportation repeal the braking requirement if an analysis showed more costs than benefits. Fraser said a correction to the agency's findings will be published to the federal register, but the repeal will stand.

"With the correction, in all scenarios costs still outweigh benefits," Fraser said. "Therefore, the outcome ... would not have changed." The Association of American Railroads declined comment on the agency's cost benefit calculations.

□

# Lawsuit: Miss America leaders illegally took over pageant

By WAYNE PARRY

Associated Press  
ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — A former board member and four states that have had their licenses terminated by the Miss America Organization are suing the group and its top leaders, claiming "an illegal and bad-faith takeover" of the pageant.

A lawsuit filed Wednesday in Atlantic City by Jennifer Vaden Barth and pageant organizations from Pennsylvania, Tennessee, West Virginia and Georgia asked a judge to void the actions of Chairwoman Gretchen Carlson and CEO Regina Hopper. It also seeks restoration of the situation that existed before the two assumed control of the Miss America Organization.

The organization called the lawsuit meritless and part of "a yearlong orchestrated smear campaign."

Numerous state organizations have been battling pageant leadership, citing dissatisfaction with the way the group is being run and with how a decision to eliminate the swimsuit competition from this year's pageant was reached.

Carlson said opponents can sue all they want, but it won't bring swimsuits back to the Miss America pageant.

"This is the first step in restoring the integrity and credibility of Miss America, which has been a cultural icon since 1921," said Va-

den Barth, a former Miss North Carolina and former Miss America board member who has been among the most vocal critics of the group's current leadership. "They have characterized anyone who opposes their decisions and those who are resistant to national pageant changes, primarily the elimination of the iconic swimsuit competition, as troublemakers and a 'noisy minority,'" Vaden Barth said. "This could not be any farther from the truth."

Carlson issued her own statement saying the organization dropped the swimsuit competition for well-documented reasons, including to make the pageant more relevant in today's society and to stop requiring young women to appear on stage in swimsuits and heels to try to win money for their education.

"Certain directors who voted for the change later sought to seize control of the organization by spewing disinformation and aligning themselves with those who opposed the change," Carlson said. "These people have seriously harmed an organization they profess to care about, and have personally maligned its leadership as part of a scheme to take power and turn back the clock. Lawsuits will not reinstate swimsuits."

The Miss America Organization called the lawsuit a

baseless move by "disgruntled and conflicted former directors who have little understanding of nonprofit governance."

"The Miss America Organization welcomes and respects differing opinions and encourages healthy and respectful debate on how best to pursue positive change," the statement read.

"However, the ongoing baseless attacks driven by ulterior motives masquerading as altruism damage the organization and cannot continue."

The litigation comes amid an ongoing struggle by state-level organizations to replace the pageant's top leaders. The parent group has terminated or declined to renew the licenses of



In this combination of Aug. 30, 2018, file photos, Gretchen Carlson, left, chairwoman of the Miss America board of directors, and Regina Hopper, the pageant's CEO speaks to the contestants and the crowd during the annual Miss America arrival celebration in Atlantic City, N.J.

Associated Press

several state organizations and is shopping around for a potential new home else-

where in the country after spending most of its nearly 100 years in Atlantic City. □

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# Spain, Catalonia leaders agree to resolve political crisis

By JOSEPH WILSON  
ARITZ PARRA  
Associated Press

**BARCELONA, Spain (AP)** — Spain's prime minister and the leader of Catalonia emerged from a meeting Thursday with an agreement to find a solution to the political crisis that has festered since the region's failed secession attempt last year.

Following the talks in the Catalan city of Barcelona between Spanish leader Pedro Sanchez and Catalan head Quim Torra, their governments issued a joint statement calling for dialogue to settle the fight.

The statement said the central and regional governments recognize there is a conflict over Catalonia's future. But, it added, "Despite the notable differences about its origin, nature and ways of resolution, they share, above all, the commitment for effective dialogue that is linked to a political proposal that has the backing of large part of Catalan society."

The two sides also agreed to have members of their



Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, left and the president of the country's Catalonia region, Quim Torra talk at the start of a meeting in Barcelona, Spain, Thursday, Dec. 20, 2018.

Associated Press

governments meet again in January.

The Spanish and Catalan governments have been at odds since the Catalan Parliament issued an ineffective declaration of independence last year, which was ruled unconstitutional by the courts and led to a temporary takeover of regional affairs by Spanish

authorities. Several leaders of the secession movement were jailed.

Sanchez and Torra sat down for the first time last July in an initial step by the Spanish prime minister to mend relations with Catalonia's separatist leaders since they both took power earlier this year.

Their second meeting took

place in Barcelona's Palau de Pedralbes, a former palace surrounded by walled gardens that once housed Spanish royalty. Torra shook hands with Sanchez on his arrival and they spoke briefly as they walked into the building, which belongs to the regional government.

"We all must open a new

chapter, a chapter in which confrontation becomes concord," Sanchez told a Catalan business forum at a nearby hotel shortly after seeing Torra.

"Against the polarization of society, cohesion. Against posturing and noise, dialogue, dialogue and dialogue," Sanchez said.

Torra also attended the forum and said that "both governments share the idea of finding a democratic solution."

Despite the willingness shown by both sides to talk, neither hid how far apart they still are on agreeing to the way to resolve Spain's worst political crisis in nearly three decades.

Catalan government spokeswoman Elsa Artadi told reporters after the meeting that Torra's position remains that a legal binding referendum on independence is the answer. Spain's minister of territorial affairs, Meritxell Batet, said the federal government has not budged from its position that such a referendum by a Spanish region is unconstitutional. □

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## Disgraced German reporter stripped of awards, returns others



The Dec. 19, 2018 photo shows issues of German news magazine Spiegel arranged on a table in Berlin.

Associated Press

By **FRANK JORDANS**  
**BERLIN (AP)** — A German journalist who was found to have made up information for numerous published articles is being stripped of two awards he received in 2014 from CNN International, the broadcaster said Thursday. In a statement to The Asso-

ciated Press, CNN International said the independent panel of judges that gave Claas Relotius the "Journalist of the Year" and "Print Journalist of the Year" prizes decided unanimously to rescind the honors following the reporting fraud revelations.

The German Reporters Forum said Relotius contacted the group about returning the four awards it gave him in recent years and to apologize.

German magazine Der Spiegel announced Wednesday that Relotius, who worked for the publication first as a freelancer and later full-time, had fabricated interviews and facts in at least 14 articles.

The fraud, which Spiegel described as "a low point" in its 70-year history, was widely condemned in Germany but also drew rebuke in the United States, where Relotius claimed to have reported many of his articles. In a lengthy blog post, two Minnesota residents described the suspicions they had about Relotius' work after he visited the town of Fergus Falls in 2017. □



# Holiday chaos as drones shut London's Gatwick Airport

By GREGORY KATZ

Associated Press

**LONDON (AP)** — Drones buzzing over the runway forced the shutdown of London's Gatwick Airport on Thursday during one of the busiest times of the year, stranding or delaying tens of thousands of Christmas-season travelers and setting off a hunt for the operator of the intruding aircraft.

The prospect of a deadly collision between what police described as industrial-grade drones and an airliner led authorities to stop all flights in and out.

Police said they had no doubt the intrusion was a deliberate attempt to disrupt operations at the airport during a peak period, but there were "absolutely no indications to suggest this is terror-related."

About 20 police units from two forces tried to zero in on the drone operator after the first sighting over Gatwick on Wednesday evening. Police told airport officials it was too risky to try to



People wait in the departures area at Gatwick airport, as the airport remains closed after drones were spotted over the airfield last night and this morning, in Gatwick, England, Thursday, Dec. 20, 2018.

Associated Press

shoot down the two drones — stray bullets might kill someone.

"Each time we believe we get close to the operator, the drone disappears. When we look to reopen the airfield, the drone reappears," said Sussex Police Superintendent Justin Burtenshaw. He said the

newer-generation drones are bigger and have more range, making it harder for police to locate the person controlling the device.

Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson said the military would be deployed to help police. He said the armed forces would bring "unique capabilities" but gave no

details.

With drones booming in popularity and becoming increasingly affordable, aviation authorities have been warning in recent years about the risk of a catastrophic collision with an airliner, and Britain — and the U.S. — have tightened restrictions. Drones

could get sucked into a jet engine or crash through a windshield, incapacitating the pilot.

The crisis at Gatwick had a ripple effect on air travel in Britain, continental Europe and beyond as incoming flights were sent to other locations and outgoing ones were grounded. British authorities said they would lift some night-flight noise restrictions at other airports to ease the congestion.

Travelers described freezing conditions overnight at Gatwick as hundreds slept on benches and floors, and passengers and their families complained they weren't being kept informed about re-routed flights. "We understand it's an emergency situation, but the lack of information is really surprising," said Vanessa Avila, an American based in Britain who works for the U.S. military. Her mother was on a flight from Florida to Gatwick that ended up landing in the northern English city of Manchester. □

# Israel, Greece, Cyprus to ink natural gas pipeline deal

By ISABEL DEBRE

JERUSALEM (AP)

— Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said that Israel, Greece and Cyprus will sign an agreement early next year to build a pipeline to carry natural gas from the eastern Mediterranean to Europe, while the United States pledged its support for the ambitious project.

The \$7 billion project, expected to take six or seven years to complete, promises to reshape the region as an energy provider and dent Russia's dominance over the European energy market. It also could curtail Iranian ambitions to use Syria as a gateway to the eastern Mediterranean.

Speaking at a summit with the Greek and Cypriot leaders in southern Israel, Netanyahu said the three nations reaffirmed their commitment to the pipeline and discussed "important aspects" of the proj-

ect. Italy is also a partner in the pipeline's planning. Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades said the project is waiting for a green light from the European Union to move forward.

"We're going to sign formally, officially, this agreement in a few months," he said. In another boost for the project, U.S. Ambassador David Friedman hailed the pipeline as integral to the "stability and prosperity of the Middle East and Europe," and urged all countries in the region to ensure its success.

Washington is eyeing the east Mediterranean with renewed interest. In a meeting with the Greek foreign minister earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the region "an important strategic frontier" for Washington, which is working to strengthen its relations with "democratic allies there like Greece and Cyprus and Is-

rael."

Israel has been developing natural gas fields off its Mediterranean coast for the past decade. Its "Tamar" field already is operational, while the larger "Leviathan" field is expected to be operational next year. While most of its gas is used domestically, it has signed export deals with Egypt and Jordan and has its eyes on the larger European market.

The proposed pipeline would allow Israel and Cyprus to export their recently discovered offshore reserves to Italy and eventually to the rest of Europe. Greece, which would act as a conduit for the gas to the continent, could also use the pipeline to convey any hydrocarbons potentially found in its own waters.

This would potentially transform the countries' economies while also diversifying Europe's gas supply and



Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades speaks during the 5th trilateral summit with Israel, Greece and Cyprus in the southern Israeli city of Beersheba, Thursday, Dec. 20, 2018.

Associated Press

reduce its dependence on Russia. Developing the region's hydrocarbon reserves would also serve to curb Teheran's bid to "open a window" to the east Mediterranean through Syria, Assistant Secretary of State Wess Mitchell told Greek language newspaper Kathimerini in an interview published this week.

At Thursday's summit, the leaders offered no details of a construction timeline. The countries also pledged to cooperate in cyber security, while Israel and Cyprus signed a preliminary deal on technical cooperation and Israel and Greece reached a framework agreement on satellite technology. □

# Putin issues ominous warning on rising nuclear war threat

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV  
MOSCOW (AP) —

The world is facing a rising threat of a nuclear war because of the U.S. pullout from arms control treaties and its destabilizing military plans, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday. Speaking at his annual news conference, Putin warned that "it could lead to the destruction of civilization as a whole and maybe even our planet."

The Russian leader added that even though a nuclear conflict now seems impossible to most, the danger is close and real.

"We are witnessing the breakup of the arms control system," he said.

He pointed at Washington's intention to walk away from the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and its reluctance to negotiate the extension of the 2010 New START agreement. U.S. officials say the withdrawal from the INF was prompted by Russian violations of the treaty, but Moscow vehemently denies any breaches.

"We will have to ensure our



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during his annual news conference in Moscow, Russia, Thursday, Dec. 20, 2018.

security," Putin said during the news conference that lasted nearly four hours. "And they shouldn't squeak later about us gaining unilateral advantages. We aren't seeking advantages,

we are trying to preserve the balance and ensure our security."

The Russian leader also scoffed at Western allegations that he is reaching for global domination, reject-

ing them as part of a smear campaign driven by domestic policy.

"As for ruling the world, we know where the headquarters trying to do that are located, and the place isn't Moscow," he said, noting that the Pentagon's annual budget of over \$700 billion dwarfs Russia's defense spending of \$46 billion.

He dismissed claims that Russia is interfering abroad, from a nerve agent poisoning in Britain to an alleged effort to infiltrate the U.S. National Rifle Association, charging that those accusations are part of U.S.-led efforts to paint Russia as a bugaboo to strengthen the Western allies' unity.

"They need an external threat to cement NATO unity," Putin said, accusing the U.S. and its allies of exploiting "phobias of the past" to achieve domestic political goals.

Russia's hopes for repairing ties with the U.S. under President Donald Trump have fizzled amid allegations of Russian meddling in the 2016 election — charges Putin has denied.

He noted that he's still keeping the door open for a meeting with Trump, but added that the prospect for that looks increasingly

dim in view of the Democrats winning control of the House.

"You can predict new attacks on the president with 100-percent probability," Putin said. "I don't know if he could engage in a direct dialogue with Russia in such conditions."

He charged that the continuing U.S. political infighting reflects a "lack of respect for voters" who elected Trump. "They don't want to acknowledge his victory and do everything to delegitimize the president," Putin added.

He insisted that a Russian woman in U.S. custody has not carried out any mission for the Russian government, even though she pleaded guilty earlier this month to acting as a covert agent of the government. Putin claimed that Maria Butina — accused of trying to infiltrate the NRA and American conservative circles around the time of Trump's election — made the guilty plea because of the threat of a long prison sentence in the case, which Putin described as fabricated.

Amid a litany of complaints over Washington's policies, Putin had one nice thing to say about the United States: He welcomed Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. military from Syria.

The U.S. "has done the right thing," Putin said, reaffirming the long-held Russian argument that the U.S. presence in Syria is illegitimate because it wasn't vetted by the U.N. Security Council or approved by Syrian President Bashar Assad's government. The pullout is also likely to strengthen Russia's role in Syria's future.

He showed no sign of backing down from Russia's stance on Ukraine, accusing his Ukrainian counterpart of provoking a naval standoff with Russia to boost his electoral prospects. The Russian coast guard fired upon and seized three Ukrainian naval vessels and 24 seamen when they tried to sail from the Black Sea into the Sea of Azov in what the U.S. and its NATO allies condemned as unjustified use of force by Russia. □

Associated Press

Information regarding the Holidays

This is to inform our readers that there will be no Aruba Today newspaper published on Tuesday 25th and Wednesday 26th of December. For this reason we are asking our clients who want to publish advertisement on Monday 24th and Thursday 27th to please deliver all ads and artwork by 5 PM, Friday December 21 latest. We thank you for your understanding and wish you a Merry Christmas!

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## Congo delays presidential vote until Dec. 30, citing fire

By SALEH MWANAMILONGO

MATHILDE BOUSSION

Associated Press

KINSHASA, Congo (AP) —

Congo's electoral commission on Thursday delayed the country's long-awaited presidential election until Dec. 30, citing a recent fire that destroyed 80 percent of the voting machines in the capital.

The vote had been scheduled for Sunday. This is the latest of several delays in the election originally scheduled for late 2016, amid opposition concerns that President Joseph Kabila had been looking for ways to stay in power. Kabila, in office since 2001, earlier this year announced he would step aside.

After last week's fire destroyed some 8,000 voting machines in Kinshasa, officials found replacement machines but had to get 5 million new ballots printed and prepared, said Corneille Nangaa, head of the national electoral commission.

He called on the country of some 40 million voters for calm. The delay of even a week could spark another wave of unrest.

Some protesters quickly gathered outside the electoral commission's offices to demonstrate against the decision to postpone the vote.

"Nangaa speaks nonsense. They didn't organize the election in seven years and they want us to believe they will be ready in seven days? Kabila is sabotaging the election. Kabila must go," said Fiston Adumba,

32.

Tensions have been rising in Congo, which has not had a peaceful, democratic change of leader since it became independent from Belgium in 1960.

On Wednesday the governor of Kinshasa, Andre Kimbuta, banned all election rallies in the capital, citing security concerns. That prevented opposition leader Martin Fayulu from holding a rally. Thousands of angry supporters gathered but police dispersed them with tear gas.

"No postponement is justifiable," Fayulu's coalition said in a statement late Thursday, saying it would not accept the delay and accusing Kabila of trying to stay in power and "continue to loot the country."

"For us, it's a decision that bothers us ... but we bow to it," Kikaya Bin Karubi, Kabila's special adviser and a spokesman for ruling party candidate Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, told The Associated Press.

Several people have been killed in recent days at chaotic opposition rallies in various parts of the country, leading the U.N. Security Council to issue a statement this week calling on Congo's government to "swiftly investigate." The council also called for a "violence-free environment." On Dec. 12, the U.N.'s special representative in Congo denounced "the obstacles encountered by some opposition candidates during their efforts to hold public meetings in certain cities around the country." Among several incidents,

Fayulu was prevented from landing in Kindu where he was scheduled hold a rally on Dec. 9, according to his campaign manager, Pierre Lumbi.

"I am concerned by the growing tensions ... and the risk of escalating violence that could lead to the commission of grave crimes," the prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, Fatou Bensouda, said in a statement on Thursday. She warned that anyone who "incites or participates in mass violence" could be prosecuted. □



Corneille Nangaa, the president of the independent electoral commission (CENI), announces that the elections will be postponed, in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Thursday Dec. 20, 2018.

Associated Press

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## Brazil AG seeks corruption charges against President Temer

By C.H. GARDINER  
 Associated Press

**RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)** — Brazil's attorney general has accused President Michele Temer of sitting at the center of "an institutionalized system of corruption" and has asked the courts to charge him with crimes as soon as he leaves office at the year's end.

Attorney General Raquel Dodge filed a request late Wednesday asking the Supreme Court to assign the case to a lower court after Temer loses his limited protections from prosecution.

"The evidence we have collected in our investigations points to an ongoing pernicious scheme based on trading favors, with Michele Temer at the center creating an institutionalized system of corruption," Dodge said.

The case focused on Grupo Rodrimar, a company accused of funneling bribes



In this Sept. 18, 2017 file photo, Brazil's President Michel Temer arrives for the swearing-in ceremony for newly named Attorney General Raquel Dodge, pictured in background, in Brasilia, Brazil.

Associated Press

through companies associated with the president. Prosecutors say one of the companies, Argeplan, paid for renovations of Temer's residence in 2000 and again for his daughter Maristela's house in 2014. Argeplan paid contrac-

tors in cash much of the \$330,000 spent on Maristela's home according to Dodge.

Temer issued a statement denying the allegations, saying he would "establish through the courts that there was no irregularity in

my actions involving the ports and there were no improper benefits to any company."

The petition listed five other individuals that the attorney general said took part in the scheme and asked that they be fined US\$8.5 million.

Brazilian law protects sitting presidents against prosecutions by requiring a vote of Congress to authorize charges against a sitting president are pursued. On two earlier occasions, lawmakers refused to authorize prosecution of Temer on other cases.

But with Temer set to leave office in less than two weeks, Dodge asked the Supreme Court to assign the complaint to a lower court as of Jan. 1, the first day of the new government. There is also a chance prosecutors could revive the earlier attempts at prosecution that were

blocked by Congress.

Temer assumed Brazil's presidential office in August 2016 after President Dilma Rousseff was impeached and removed on charges of criminal, administrative misconduct.

The incoming administration also ran into corruption controversies even before taking office.

A Sao Paulo court this week convicted President-elect Jair Bolsonaro's nominee for environment minister of fraud when he served as Sao Paulo state's environment minister between 2016 and 2018.

The court ruling published Wednesday said he modified an environmental protection plan for the Tiete River area to favor mining interests.

The court suspended his political rights for three years and imposed a fine, though it can be appealed. □

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# LOCAL



## Riu Palace Aruba's employees enjoyed themselves at their Christmas party



ORANJESTAD – The employees of Riu Palace Aruba came together and had a wonderful evening at their Christmas party. Everyone enjoyed the evening talking, dancing, drinking and tasting the different dishes and snacks of the buffet. Everyone showed the joy of this special moment with a big smile on their face dur-

ing the entire event.

The employees had the opportunity to be carried away by the positivity transmitted by the music meanwhile they were taking pictures and creating new memories with each other. Riu Palace Aruba's management was happy and proud to see that, because

he knows its employees deserve to enjoy themselves after working for hours to serve the RIU's guests.

As a token of appreciation of their work, the hotel management gives a plaque to different employees and departments that excelled during the whole year. For the award of effort and dedication of the year the winner was the housekeeping department; award of "Papeleton of the year" goes to animation team and reception; Genoveva Gonzales, of reception, was chosen as the super-

visor of the year; assistant manager of the year Pedro Goyburo; manager of the year Henry Camacho; and the employee of the year has been Enrique Vasquez. They held a raffle for the employees, and the winners won different prize as television, speakers, laptop, headphones, cell phones and many more.

For the Hotel Management, to organize this party was a great opportunity to thank their employees for their good job and to value their effort. Riu Palace Aruba wants to wish each employee, each citizen of Aruba and each tourist a happy holidays.

### About RIU:

The international RIU chain was founded in Mallorca

by the Riu family in 1953 as a small holiday firm and is still owned by the family's third generation. The company specializes in holiday resorts and over 70% of its establishments offer its acclaimed All Inclusive by RIU service. With the inauguration of its first city hotel in 2010, RIU is expanding its range of products with its own line of city hotels called Riu Plaza. RIU Hotels & Resorts now has 92 hotels in 19 countries which welcome over 4 million guests a year and provide jobs for a total of 28,894 employees.

RIU is currently the world's 34th ranked chain, one of the Caribbean's most popular, the third largest in Spain in terms of revenue and the fourth largest in number of rooms. □







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Last but not least: check out our website and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today's newspaper we received a great picture from Corinne Lissoos. She wrote: "Aruba to Me is a Treasure." □



# GroceriesToGo Aruba delivers to anyone in Aruba!

PALM BEACH - GroceriesToGo Aruba has developed a convenient service that shops and delivers grocery items and essentials to vacationers and anyone on the

island, allowing them more time to spend with family and friends while here on vacation. It is also for busy people who do not have time to spend standing in line at the grocery store.



Jared Pick, CEO and founder of the company said, "Our mission is to provide quality products and convenient services to our customers that will allow them more time to enjoy their vacation and the wonders of Aruba, One Happy Island!" Pick's family is originally from Aruba where his grandfather, known as Chipi Chipi, started La Moderna. GroceriesToGo Aruba is a family owned business where Karl Pick is CFO and Marilyn Pick is Marketing Director.

GroceriesToGo Aruba, [www.GroceriesToGoAruba.com](http://www.GroceriesToGoAruba.com), is the first full service online grocery delivery business in Aruba. "The need to fill the families grocery order without having to take time away from your vacation to shop was our motivation to start our delivery service." GroceriesTo-



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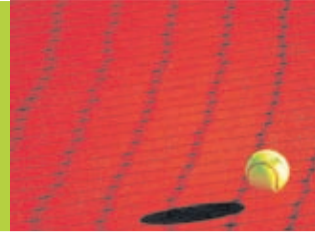
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# SPORTS



New England Patriots wide receiver Josh Gordon warms up during an NFL football practice, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, in Foxborough, Mass.

## NFL suspends Patriots' Gordon for substance abuse violation

By KYLE HIGHTOWER

AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP)

— Patriots receiver Josh Gordon was suspended indefinitely Thursday by the NFL for violating an agreement that allowed him to play after multiple drug suspensions, casting doubt on whether the talented but troubled playmaker would ever play in the league again.

League officials said Thursday that Gordon was returned to the reserve/commissioner suspended list indefinitely for breaking the terms of his reinstatement under the NFL substance abuse policy.

The news came several hours after Gordon said he was stepping away from football to focus on his mental health.

Gordon said on Twitter his decision was spurred by his own feelings that he could have a better grasp on things mentally. He thanked the Patriots for their support and vowed to work his way back. "We support Josh Gordon in his continued efforts to focus on his health."

Continued on Page 22



# ROCKETS LAUNCH!

## Houston sets NBA record with 26 3s in 136-118 win

Houston Rockets guard Chris Paul, right, passes the ball over Washington Wizards forward Trevor Ariza (1) during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, in Houston.

# Hirscher earns Austrian-record 63rd World Cup ski win



Austria's Marcel Hirscher speeds down the course during a ski World Cup men's Slalom race, in Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Austria, Thursday, Dec. 20, 2018.

Associated Press

**SAALBACH-HINTERGLEMM, Austria (AP)** — Marcel Hirscher returned to a hill where he raced as a kid to become the most successful Austrian skier of all time. The seven-time overall champion won a World Cup slalom in his native province of Salzburg on Thursday for his 63rd career victory, overtaking Annemarie Moser-Proell, who had 62 wins when she retired in 1980.

"As a kid I have competed in regional races on this hill. The course was just a bit more to the right," Hirscher said. "These are great memories. The circle closes here."

Only Ingemar Stenmark (86) and Lindsey Vonn (82) have won more World Cup races.

Moser-Proell was full of praise for the new Austrian record-holder.

"We have never seen such a perfect ski racer before," she told Austrian broadcaster ORF. "When I see Marcel now, I am amazed that I achieved something similar back then. But you can't really compare the two eras. Everything is much more professional nowadays."

Defying difficult course conditions, Hirscher held on to a big first-run lead to finish 0.38 seconds ahead of Loic Meillard of Switzerland, who was only 12th after the opening run and claimed his second podium in two days. Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway was 0.47 behind in third. "I would have been happy with a top-10 result and I can't believe I am on the podium for two days in a row," said Meillard, also runner-up in Wednesday's GS. "To be on a podium with Marcel and Henrik is truly something special."

It was the fourth straight win in the discipline for Hirscher, who has won nine of the last 10 World Cup slaloms. "It sounds amazing but it is very surreal," Hirscher said about his 63rd win. "There will be a time when I can really enjoy this but for the moment it is really amazing to have another victory, in one of the hardest slalom races I have ever skied in." Many racers struggled on the Schneekristall course, which had patches of weak snow in the icy top layer on the lower part of the slope. The second run had to be delayed for 15 minutes to give organizers more time

to harden the surface with water and salt. Kristoffersen called it "the worst conditions I have skied on in my World Cup career."

"It was really on the limit. It

was tough, incredible," said the Norwegian, who still led Meillard by eight tenths at the final split but trailed the Swiss skier by 0.09 at the finish.

"Normally that would not happen," Kristoffersen said. Hirscher started his final run with an advantage of 2.13 seconds over then leader Meillard, allowing him to take a conservative approach.

"On the steep part, you just have to make sure that you come down. It was hardly skiable," Hirscher said. "All in all it was a good and solid performance."

Hirscher's teammate, Michael Matt, who was second after the opening run, dropped to fifth after making mistakes and posting only the 24th fastest time in his final run.

Also, Felix Neureuther dropped from fourth to 27th in his first slalom race in 13 months. The German missed most of last season after tearing the ACL in his left knee, and had his comeback delayed by a broken thumb and a concussion.

The race replaced a slalom which was canceled in France last week. The men's World Cup continues with another slalom in the Italian resort of Madonna Di Campiglio on Saturday. □

## Former Louisville coach Rick Pitino in talks with Greek team

By **DEMETRIS NELLAS**

**ATHENS, Greece (AP)** — Former Louisville coach Rick Pitino is in talks with the basketball club Panathinaikos about its coaching vacancy, a Greek team official said Thursday.

The official spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter.

The official said "contacts have been made" and it is "probable" the Hall of Fame coach and Panathinaikos, the reigning Greek champion, will reach an agreement.

Messages left with Pitino's representatives in New York and Louisville, Kentucky, were not immediately returned.

The 66-year-old Pitino was fired by Louisville a year

ago after the school was implicated in a U.S. federal corruption investigation of college basketball.

Panathinaikos fired coach Xavi Pascual on Thursday following a fifth loss in seven games in the Euroleague, Europe's main club competition.

Panathinaikos' players include former Florida standout and Memphis Grizzlies player Nick Calathes, former NBA lottery pick Georgios Papagiannis and former Knicks player Thanasis Antetokounmpo, the older brother of Milwaukee Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo.

The hiring would mark a stunning turn for Pitino, who was fired by Louisville in October 2017 following the school's acknowledgment it was involved in the fed-

eral inquiry.

Pitino was not mentioned in the complaint and has maintained he was not aware of a scheme to pay the family of former Cardinals recruit Brian Bowen to play for Louisville. The immediate fallout from that scandal — soon after a sex scandal that resulted in the program vacating its 2013 NCAA title — ultimately cost him his job after 16 seasons. While Pitino expressed a desire to remain involved in basketball, he said in September he was likely done with coaching despite feeling "physically very young and mentally very young."

"I think my time has passed, I really do," Pitino told the AP during a tour for his book "Pitino: My Story," which told his side of the events leading to his ouster. □

# Penguins end Capitals' 5-game winning streak

**By The Associated Press**  
**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Sidney Crosby and Bryan Rust scored and the Pittsburgh Penguins ended hot streaks by Alex Ovechkin and the Washington Capitals with a 2-1 victory Wednesday night.  
 The third meeting this season between these long-time rivals featured tight checking, strong goaltending and more than a few punches. Rust broke a 1-1 tie late in the second period with his sixth goal in five games, and the Penguins held on against the defending Stanley Cup champions.  
 Playing in his second game since returning from a lower body injury, Pittsburgh goalie Matt Murray stopped 31 shots.  
 Lars Eller scored the lone goal for the Capitals. They had won five in a row.  
 Ovechkin was held without a goal for the first time in seven games and had his career-high run of games with a point end at 14.  
 In addition, Washington's

Evgeny Kuznetsov had his streak of eight straight games with an assist come to an end, one shy of the franchise record.  
**AVALANCHE 2, CANADIENS 1**  
**DENVER (AP)** — Gabriel Landeskog broke a tie 35 seconds into the third period by batting in a goal, Philipp Grubauer stopped 35 shots and Colorado beat Montreal.  
 Mikko Rantanen had a goal and an assist to give him an NHL-leading 58 points. He's followed by teammate Nathan MacKinnon, who has 55 points after a two-assist evening. Landeskog, the third member of their high-flying line, scored his team-best 23rd goal.  
 Carey Price, who stopped 24 shots, came up short in his bid for his 300th career victory. He's trying to become the 35th goaltender to reach that milestone.  
 Brendan Gallagher had a power-play goal for Montreal, breaking the Canadiens' 0 for 25 dry spell with the man advantage. □



Pittsburgh Penguins center Sidney Crosby (87) gets away from Washington Capitals right wing T.J. Oshie (77) in the first period of an NHL hockey game, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, in Washington. Associated Press

# Suns beat Celtics 111-103, run winning streak to 4 games

By The Associated Press

**BOSTON (AP)** — Devin Booker had 25 points and eight assists, and Deandre Ayton added 23 points and 18 rebounds to lead the suddenly resurgent Phoenix Suns past the Boston Celtics 111-103 on Wednesday night.

It was the fourth consecutive victory for the Suns since opening the season 4-24. Phoenix has its first four-game winning streak since March 2015.

T.J. Warren scored 21 points and Kelly Oubre Jr. had 13 for the Suns.

Kyrie Irving led Boston with 29 points and Jayson Tatum had 18. The Celtics lost their second straight after winning eight in a row.

Boston center Aron Baynes broke a bone in his left hand early in the game and the team announced that he'll be sidelined indefinitely.

**ROCKETS 136, WIZARDS 118**  
**HOUSTON (AP)** — James Harden scored 35 points as Houston set an NBA record with 26 3-pointers and won its fifth straight game.

A 3 by Gary Clark tied the record with 2:42 left. The



Phoenix Suns guard Devin Booker (1) drives to the basket against the Boston Celtics during the second half of a basketball game in Boston, Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018. The Suns defeated the Celtics 111-103.

Associated Press

Rockets missed their next four tries before Michael Carter-Williams hit one with 31.1 seconds left and was greeted with loud cheers. The previous record was held by the Cleveland Cavaliers, who made 25 against Atlanta on March 3, 2017.

Harden made six 3s, Chris

Paul added 5 and Gerald Green and Eric Gordon made 4 each on a night Houston attempted 55.

The winning streak ties their longest of the season and comes after the Rockets lost their previous three games.

Bradley Beal had 28 points to lead the Wizards, who

lost for the sixth time in seven games.

**THUNDER 132, KINGS 113**  
**SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)** — Paul George scored 43 points, Russell Westbrook had a triple-double and Steven Adams grabbed a career-high 23 rebounds in Oklahoma City's win over Sacramento in a matchup of short-handed teams.

George hit four 3-pointers and went 9 of 10 from the free throw line. Westbrook had 19 points, 17 assists and 11 rebounds for the 112th triple-double of his career. George and Adams had double-doubles — George pulled down 12 rebounds and Adams scored 20 points — as the Thunder won for the eighth time in 11 games. Oklahoma City finished with a season-high 66 boards.

Buddy Hield had a career-best 37 points and De'Aaron Fox added 28 points and 12 assists for the Kings.

**HORNETS 110, CAVALIERS 99**

**CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP)** — Kemba Walker had 30 points and six assists to help Charlotte rally past Cleveland.

Walker was coming off a season-low four points in Saturday's 128-100 home loss to the Los Angeles Lakers in which he shot 2 for 13 from the field and missed

all five 3-point tries. After missing his first seven shots against Cleveland, Walker got untracked and Charlotte evened its season record to .500 (15-15).

It was Walker's ninth 30-point game this season. Jeremy Lamb added 18 points and 12 rebounds, and Marvin Williams 18 points and 10 rebounds for Charlotte, which snapped a two-game losing streak.

Jordan Clarkson scored 20 points, Jaron Blossomgame had 15 and Cedi Osman added 13 for the Cavaliers.

**76ERS 131, KNICKS 109**

**PHILADELPHIA (AP)** — Joel Embiid had 24 points and 10 rebounds, Ben Simmons got his second triple-double in three games to lead Philadelphia.

Simmons had 13 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. Jimmy Butler added 20 points and Landry Shamet had a career-high 17 off the bench for the Sixers, who shot 53.4 percent from the field and 50 percent from 3-point range.

Philadelphia had lost three of four, including a lopsided defeat in San Antonio on Monday.

Tim Hardaway Jr. scored 27 points and Kevin Knox had 21 for the Knicks (9-24), who have lost three straight and eight of their last nine. Emmanuel Mudiay, averaging 20 points per game in his previous nine contests, was held to 11 points on 3-of-12 shooting.

**SPURS 129, MAGIC 90**

**ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)** — LeMarcus Aldridge scored 20 points and five San Antonio players scored in double figures in the win.

The Spurs, the NBA's leading 3-point shooting team, went 12 of 19 from behind the arc and 50 for 77 overall (64.9 percent) to win for the sixth time in seven games.

Marco Belinelli came off the bench and scored 18 points on 7-for-9 shooting, and DeMar DeRozan and Bryan Forbes added 17 points each.

D.J. Augustin led Orlando with 17 points. Rookie center Mo Bamba had seven points, eight rebounds and two blocks in his first NBA start. □

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## Goff, Rams offense not panicking after consecutive losses

By DAN GREENSPAN  
THOUSAND OAKS, Calif.  
(AP) — The Los Angeles Rams insist there is no panic internally after losing consecutive games for the first time under coach Sean McVay.

Convincing those outside the team that everything is fine is another matter.

"My wife got vitamins out in the morning when we lose two games," cornerback Aqib Talib said Wednesday. "You got to just get back to the basics and play football."

Quarterback Jared Goff, who has been receiving the most scrutiny for his performances in losses at Chicago and against Philadelphia, was emphasizing that message. Goff's production has dropped off during the past three games, throwing one touchdown pass and six interceptions in that span after posting a 26-to-6 touchdown to interception ratio over the first 11 games of the season.

Goff had another interception against the Eagles changed to a lost fumble by league statisticians, not that it offered any solace.

"Doesn't matter," Goff said. "It was a turnover."

Cutting down on giveaways is the priority for the Rams (11-3) before facing Arizona on the road Sunday. Everything else brought up as the reason for the downturn in his productivity, from wide receiver Cooper Kupp's season-ending knee injury to struggles in pass protection, does not matter nearly as much as playing turnover-free football, Goff said.

"I think each game is independent of each other,"

Goff said. "I don't think there's one singular thing. You look at the last game, just made a couple of dumb plays that hurt us and can't do that."

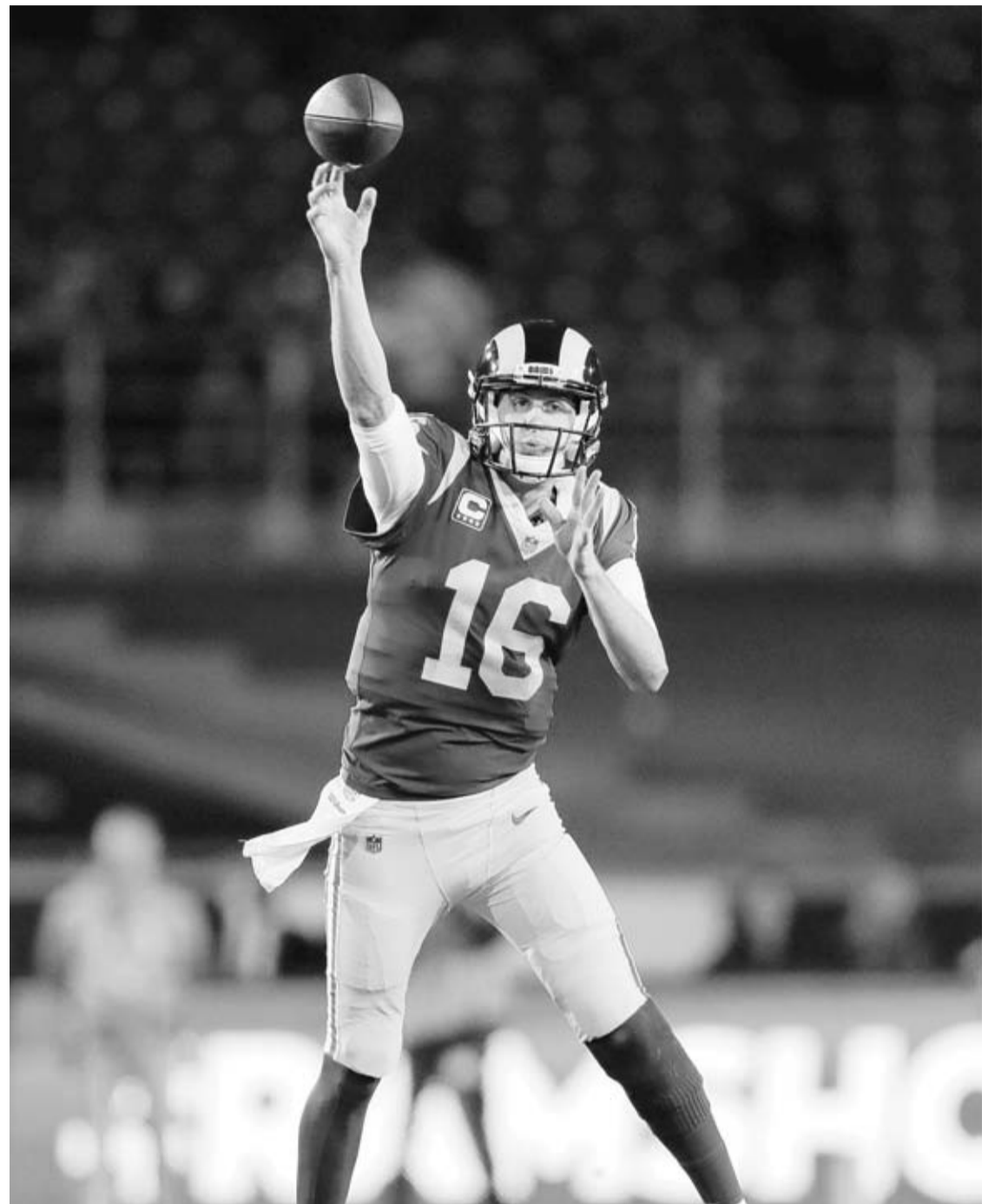
Goff said there is an extra determination to avoid similar mistakes against the Cardinals (3-11), which McVay said reflects the team's commitment to getting back on track over the final two weeks of the regular season. Though he always stresses process over outcome, McVay admitted there is a different level of intensity this week because of the two losses.

"I'd like to think that regardless of what the outcome is, it's the same, but human nature doesn't really allow that," McVay said. "I know there's an increased sense of urgency from us as coaches. I sense that from the players."

McVay said nothing changes in terms of the Rams' preparations going into their final road game of the regular season, which includes the hand gestures and verbal cues the offense uses at the line of scrimmage to make adjustments, even after Arizona claimed wide receiver and return specialist Pharoh Cooper on Wednesday after the Rams placed him on waivers.

Passing game coordinator Shane Waldron said there was no need to change signals despite the under-standing Cooper would be giving his new team detailed information on audibles and other aspects of the offense.

"I mean, there are some teams in the league where those signals or some of



Los Angeles Rams quarterback Jared Goff passes against the Philadelphia Eagles during the first half in an NFL football game Sunday, Dec. 16, 2018, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

those things have been the same since 15 years moving forward," Waldron said. "Some of those things, I think, are overvalued. You got to go out there and play football and execute at a high level. If you start worrying too much about hand signals or codewords you're not allowing yourself to play fast, so we still feel we can operate as we have been operating."

As confident as Waldron is in the mechanics of operating the offense, McVay remains just as enthused

about Goff, provided his quarterback uses the handful of plays that have hindered the Rams the past two weeks to improve. "Unfortunately, in him, we keep talking about two plays, and that's the nature of the quarterback position," McVay said. "But I would say this, we'll continue to learn from it."

Goff has no doubts he and the Rams offense will reap the benefits, no vitamins necessary. "Again, we're talking about things going bad when two weeks ago

it was a much different conversation," Goff said. "We need to fix some things and get some things ironed out and we will. I expect to do that this week."

NOTES: RB Todd Gurley (knee) and Justin Davis (shoulder) did not participate in the team's walk-through Wednesday. McVay expects Gurley will be available to play Sunday. ... McVay has not decided whether WR JoJo Natson or DB Blake Countess will return kicks in place of Cooper. □

# Bears, Texans give last-place teams hope for 2019

By **ROB MAADDI**

AP Pro Football Writer

There's hope in 2019 for the Jaguars, Raiders, Giants and other teams who will finish last in the division this year.

The Chicago Bears (10-4) already won the NFC North to complete a worst-to-first turnaround, and the Houston Texans (10-4) are on the verge of securing the AFC South to become the second team to do it this season.

At least one team has finished in first place in its division the year after finishing last or tied for last place in 15 of the past 16 seasons. Since the playoff format was expanded to 12 teams in 1990, at least four teams have reached the post-season each year after not qualifying the previous season.

In 2017, the Philadelphia Eagles went from last place to winning a Super Bowl title. The Bears and Texans are hoping to duplicate that feat this year.

Here's a look inside more numbers entering Week 16: **COUNTDOWN TO 50:** Patrick Mahomes needs five touchdown passes to become the third quarterback to throw for 50 in a



In this Sunday, Dec. 16, 2018 file photo, Chicago Bears running back Jordan Howard (24) runs to the end zone for a touchdown during the first half of an NFL football game against the Green Bay Packers in Chicago.

Associated Press

season. Peyton Manning had 55 in 2013, breaking Tom Brady's mark of 50 set in 2007. Manning also threw 49 TDs in 2004, Dan Marino had 48 in 1984 and Drew Brees tossed 46 in 2011.

**RUNNING RAVENS:** Led by quarterback Lamar Jack-

son and rookie running back Gus Edwards, the Ravens have rushed for at least 190 yards in five consecutive games. Baltimore is the first team since the 1976 Steelers to do so five straight games.

**MACK ATTACK:** Indianapo-

lis Colts running back Marlon Mack joined Eric Dickerson and Edgerrin James as the only players in franchise history with multiple games of at least 125 yards rushing yards and two TDs rushing in a season.

**JULIO'S WAY:** Julio Jones

of the Atlanta Falcons is the fifth player with at least three seasons of at least 1,500 yards receiving. Jerry Rice had four. Marvin Harrison, Antonio Brown and Andre Johnson also did it three times.

**DUAL THREAT:** Carolina's Christian McCaffrey needs nine receptions to break Matt Forte's (102) record for most catches by a running back in a season.

**DUAL THREAT II:** New York Giants star Saquon Barkley needs seven receptions to break Reggie Bush's (88) record for most receptions by a rookie back.

**TIGHT END TAKEDOWN:** Kansas City's Travis Kelce needs 108 yards receiving to break the single-season record for tight ends held by Rob Gronkowski (1,327).

**TIGHT END TAKEDOWN II:** Philadelphia's Zach Ertz is 10 receptions away from breaking the single-season record for tight ends held by Jason Witten (110).

**4K CLUB:** Brady (3,979) and Rivers (3,951) are close to joining Manning and Brees as the only quarterbacks to throw for 4,000 yards 10 times. Manning did it in 14 seasons. Brees needs 334 yards to reach that number for the 13th time. □



In this Dec. 2, 2018, file photo, New England Patriots wide receiver Josh Gordon is congratulated after an NFL football game against the Minnesota Vikings at Gillette Stadium, in Foxborough, Mass.

Associated Press

## PATRIOTS' GORDON

Continued from Page 17

His attempt to do so is a private and personal matter, which we intend to respect," Patriots team officials said.

Gordon has been suspended several times by the NFL

for violations of its drug policies since being drafted by the Browns in 2012, and missed the entire 2015 and 2016 seasons.

After being reinstated by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell in 2017, Gordon revealed in an interview

with GQ magazine that he drank or used marijuana before games. "Probably every game of my career," he said.

Gordon also said in a 2017 mini-documentary on Uninterrupted.com that he took Xanax, cocaine, marijuana and other narcotics. Gordon's outlook had improved with New England, where he landed in September in a trade after the Browns felt it was time to cut ties. He had 40 receptions for 720 yards and three touchdowns with the Patriots, five years removed from an All-Pro season in 2013 with 87 catches for 1,646 yards and nine touchdowns.

Special teams captain and receiver Matt Slater said despite his suspension, Gordon still has support inside the Patriots locker room.

"My No. 1 concern is with him as a man," Slater said.

"I'm thankful for the approach he took here, how he was as a teammate. I enjoyed getting to know him in that process and I'll continue to support him in any way I can."

Safety Devin McCourty said the 27-year-old's well-being is his biggest concern, not football.

"Life comes before all of that," McCourty said. "I think we wish him the best and care about that more than wins or losses."

New England officials had insulated Gordon and focused him on getting acclimated to the team's highly-disciplined culture, while also limiting his time with reporters.

Coach Bill Belichick said last week that Gordon was thriving on the field, developing chemistry with quarterback Tom Brady and learning the offensive system. "He's a smart kid,

so he learns well," Belichick said. "For better or worse, he's been in a lot of different systems. I know it was only one team, but it was a lot of different systems up there. Most everything we've asked him to do he's done somewhere along the line for somebody."

"As we go through each week, I would say we've gained a little more ground on the overall knowledge of the system," he said.

Gordon said earlier this month he thought he was settling in well with New England.

"It felt like home a long time ago," Gordon said. "The atmosphere is very welcoming. It took me a little bit to get acclimated to the area. Other than that, it's been pretty smooth so far, and that's due in part to the facility, the organization, just everybody helping me along the way." □

# Bradley on Berhalter's 1st roster, Guzan, Altidore left off

By RONALD BLUM

AP Sports Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — U.S. captain Michael Bradley has an immediate chance to show new coach Gregg Berhalter he deserves to be considered for the next World Cup cycle.

The 31-year-old midfielder was the oldest player and among just four veterans selected for a 27-man roster that will attend Berhalter's first training camp starting Jan. 6.

"I truly believe that and this is an opportunity for Michael to show his value to the group," Berhalter said during a conference call Thursday. "So we're excited to see him and how he works through this training camp and meeting the team and also contributing to what we're trying to do on the field."

Bradley has 142 international appearances but like most veterans was dropped after the October 2017 loss at Trinidad and Tobago that ended the Americans' streak of seven straight World Cup appearances. He returned

in October following a one-year absence along with 34-year-old goalkeeper Brad Guzan.

Guzan was omitted so he can train under a new club coach with Atlanta, which opens in February with the CONCACAF Champions League. Berhalter left off 29-year-old forward Jozy Altidore and 28-year-old midfielder Darlington Nagbe, both recovering from injuries. Berhalter said Altidore will come to camp for a day or two to "see the environment."

The first U.S. coach who played for the Americans in the World Cup, Berhalter was hired Dec. 2 from the Columbus Crew to succeed Dave Sarachan, the interim coach for 13 months. Berhalter's first matches are exhibitions against Panama on Jan. 27 at Glendale, Arizona, and against Costa Rica on Feb. 2 at San Jose, California. The team's first competitive match in 20 months is June 18 at St. Paul, Minnesota, where the Americans open the defense of their CONCACAF Gold Cup title.



In this Sept. 1, 2017, file photo, U.S. midfielder Michael Bradley, right, and Costa Rica midfielder Celso Borges compete for the ball during the first half of a World Cup qualifying soccer match in Harrison, N.J.

Associated Press

Sarachan gave debuts to 23 players, with the Americans winning three matches, lost five and tied four. Berhalter chose 12 players with no national team experience for the training camp, and seven others with five appearances or fewer. The group averages 24 years, 230 days and just 10 appearances.

Berhalter's roster was chosen entirely from MLS, and he intends to add a central

midfielder or winger. The only other players picked with more than a dozen appearances were forward Gyasi Zardes (40) and midfielders Kellyn Acosta (23) and Paul Arriola (17). Players who could make debuts include are goalkeeper Tyler Miller; defenders Justin Glad, Nick Lima, Daniel Lovitz, Mark McKenzie, Keegan Rosenberry and Auston Trusty; midfielders Corey Baird, Russell

Canouse and Djordje Mihailovic; and forwards Jeremy Ebobisse and Christian Ramirez.

Berhalter has been in Europe meeting with the foreign-based portion of his player pool, a group not available to the national team until a pair of home exhibitions in March. The 45-year-old Berhalter, a member of the 2002 and '06 World Cup rosters, said he is "trying to get a sense of the past but also the future, what this group is looking for."

"I think we can use this opportunity in this training camp to just start the process and set the tone for what this group is going to be like," he said, emphasizing three points: "building a culture within the team, instilling a style of play and then competing — competing in every single thing we do."

Among the players he met with in Germany was 20-year-old star midfielder Christian Pulisic, who on Tuesday made first Bundesliga start for Borussia Dortmund since Sept. 29. □

# House panel finds Olympic leaders valued image over safety

By EDDIE PELLIS

AP National Writer

A congressional review of the U.S. Olympic system's handling of sex-abuse cases criticizes a culture that sought to protect reputation and image over athlete safety.

A House subcommittee released the report Thursday, outlining conclusions about the handling of sex-abuse cases involving Larry Nassar and others that have led to calls for change at the U.S. Olympic Committee and the sports organizations it oversees.

The report acknowledges the changes that have come since Nassar's crimes were exposed. But it criticizes the lack of conformity among the organizations, noting some didn't use background checks or publish banned lists.

The panel's recommendations include a review of the law that governs the USOC, and the USOC using its authority to more actively protect athletes.

USOC CEO Sarah Hirshland pointed out the federation formed the U.S. Center for SafeSport and is reviewing how it engages with the national governing bodies and athletes. A report commissioned by former WNBA President Lisa Borders is expected next year. "We will continue to do the work necessary to develop a healthy culture that keeps athletes safe and allows them to be their very best," Hirshland said.

In one of the most striking examples of the diffuse policies that exist in the U.S. Olympic system, the report included a table detailing each NGB's policy on

how it handles banned lists. Each response was different; 18 of the NGBs do not publish their lists.

Those differences are part of what has made it difficult for the SafeSport Center to publish a comprehensive list of all banned people — among the many tasks it was given when it was established in March 2017.

The report said perhaps its most troubling finding was a culture that prioritized image over safety.

It included instructions to panels that deliver sanctions that included "the effect on the USOC's reputation" as one of the factors to consider when deciding on penalties. That bullet point has since been removed. Also in the report was a deposition from a USOC attorney that underscores the general state of confusion



In this May 23, 2018, file photo, witnesses prepare to testify before the House Commerce Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee about the Olympic community's ability to protect athletes from sexual abuse, on Capitol Hill in Washington. From left are: U.S. Olympic Committee Acting CEO Susanne Lyons, USA Gymnastics President and CEO Kerry Perry, USA Swimming President and CEO Tim Hinchey, USA Taekwondo CEO Steve McNally, USA Volleyball CEO Jamie Davis, and U.S. Center for SafeSport President and CEO Shellie Pfohl.

Associated Press

about the relationship between the USOC, the NGBs and the athletes. On a day-to-day basis, NGBs have more direct contact with athletes than the USOC. Meanwhile, the USOC provides funding to NGBs but doesn't have much say in their operation.

In a 2016 deposition related to sex abuse, USOC attorney Gary Johansen was asked: "You want to protect your athletes from being sexually abused. That's a top priority, right, sir?" Johansen's response: "The USOC does not have athletes." □

# Then one foggy Christmas Eve, reindeer got connected

By JAMES BROOKS

Associated Press

ROVANIEMI, Finland (AP)

— Rudolph and friends no longer need to rely on the famous reindeer's red nose to avoid getting lost. Now they have wireless technology.

To keep track of their animals in Lapland, Northern Finland's vast and remote snow-covered forests, reindeer herders are turning to technology by fitting them with internet-connected collars.

Herders who previously spent weeks searching for their reindeer in sub-zero wilderness can now instantly see where they are on a mobile app that receives up-to-date location data.



Reindeer herder Seppo Koivisto holds a smartphone, showing the mobile app used to locate reindeer in Finnish Lapland, in Rovaniemi, Finland, Thursday Dec. 13 2018.

Associated Press

"In all sectors of society, this (tech) efficiency is playing a big role. It's the same in reindeer husbandry," said Seppo Koivisto, whose hundreds of reindeer roam

Lapland's 4,000 square-kilometer (1,545 square-mile) Palojarvi District.

Lapland's reindeer are the main source of livelihood for about 1,500 herders, so there's high interest in technology that can help manage them. Koivisto is using the latest generation of wireless collars made possible by a group that includes Helsinki-based communications firm Digita and Finland's Reindeer Herding Association. The association is based in Rovaniemi, which bills itself as the "official hometown of Santa Claus."

"We have fewer workers, so their actions should be more and more efficient all the time," and this technology lets them do that, said Koivisto. Since he started using the technology, he has only had to hire half the usual number of workers.

The technology can also help herders account for attacks from predators such as wolverines and lynx that roam across the Russian border.

At least 5,000 reindeer are killed every year, according to the herding association. Most that die in Lapland's forests are never found. Koivisto says he loses about 8 percent of his herd annually.

The collars, which use GPS satellite positioning and special long-distance wireless networks, help herders find reindeer corpses so they can claim valuable compensation from the Finnish government.

If a collar-fitted reindeer doesn't move after about four hours, its icon changes from green to red on the app, signaling a potential attack.

To best locate groups of reindeer, which are bred for their meat, milk and fur, the trackers are fitted on the herd's female leader.

"In the old days, we roughly knew reindeer locations, in which part of the district they were," said herder Jarno Konttaniemi. "But today, with this technology, we know exactly where they are."

Digita built the long-range network, which it says is the world's most northerly "Internet of Things" network. The "Internet of Things" refers to the next generation of devices and everyday objects that are connected to the internet.

While reindeer herding has roots going back hundreds of years, "at least some of the reindeer owners are really up-to-date when it comes to using technology," said Ari Kuukka, Digita's head of "Internet of Things" services.

The herding association has been working for years on a reliable GPS reindeer tracking system. The main challenge was coming up with a device that was cheap but had a long-lasting battery.

The third and latest prototype is the size of a deck of cards, stays charged for about a year, and costs about 90 euros (\$102).

The herding association hopes to eventually shrink the transmitter down to a coin-sized microchip that can be attached to a reindeer's ear, said Matti Sarkela, the herding association's head of office who has previously helped develop a mobile app that alerts drivers to reindeer near Finland's often icy roads.

He hopes embracing new technologies can inspire the younger generation to carry on the herding tradition.

"It has brought a lot of young people into our industry all the time," said Sarkela. "It's a really positive thing." □

## Human rights group report gains traction, Twitter hammered

NEW YORK (AP) — A report on Twitter by the human rights group Amnesty International is gaining traction and the company's shares were punished Thursday, suffering one of their worst declines this year.

The report, released earlier this week, said the social media platform has permitted a toxic online culture that allows pervasive abuse of women.

While reports from Amnesty International are not regular reading on Wall Street, the Citron Research newsletter is. On Thursday, Citron editor Andrew Left cited the report and called Twitter the "Harvey Weinstein" of social media. Shares of Twitter Inc. plunged 13 percent in mid-day trading.

Amnesty and data firm Element AI scoured through 288,000 tweets sent to almost 800 women politicians and journalists in 2017. Element calculated that 1.1 million abusive or problematic tweets were sent to those women last year, or, Amnesty said, about one every 30 seconds.

Researchers found that women of color were much more likely, 34 percent, to



In this Feb. 8, 2018, file photo, the logo for Twitter is displayed above a trading post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange.

Associated Press

be the subject of problematic tweets.

Vijaya Gadde, the legal, policy, trust and safety global lead at Twitter, said in a response to Amnesty that the company desires a healthy and transparent discourse.

"Twitter's health is measured by how we help encourage more healthy debate, conversations, and critical thinking," Gadde said. "Conversely, abuse, malicious automation, and manipulation detract from the health of Twitter. We are committed to holding ourselves publicly accountable towards progress in

this regard."

After weeks of castigation at Facebook over now well-known privacy issues, investors have grown leery of issues that have the potential to become a public nightmare for social media platforms. Left, of Citron Research, lowered his expectations on company shares, anticipating a difficult path for Twitter in light of heightened attention to the problems in social media.

Left said that said Twitter has become "uninvestable" and that advertisers will soon have to reconsider their sponsorships on the platform. □



# US mortgage rates slipped this week

By JOSH BOAK

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. long-term mortgage rates slipped this week, reflecting the stock market decline and rush by investors to Treasury notes.

Mortgage buyer Freddie Mac said Thursday that the average rate on the benchmark 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage fell slightly to 4.62 percent from 4.63 percent last week. Rates averaged 3.94 percent a year ago.

The rate on 15-year fixed-rate loans held at 4.07 percent for the second straight week, up from 3.38 percent a year ago.

Higher mortgage rates over the past year have caused home sales to drop. But mortgage rates have declined in recent weeks as fears about an economic slowdown have caused more investors to sell stocks and buy Treasury notes.

Amid the purchases, the interest on a 10-year Treasury



In this Aug. 30, 2018 file photo, a sale signs stand outside a home on the market in Denver.

Associated Press

has fallen from 3 percent to under 2.8 percent in the past month. Mortgage rates generally correspond with the interest charged on U.S. government debt.

Sam Khater, Freddie Mac's chief economist, said that lower rates should help to boost home sales.

"Given the further drop in rates we've seen this month, we expect to see a modest rebound in home sales as well," he said. □



## Medical bills plague millennials; these tips may be the cure

By SEAN PYLES

Associated Press

Chrystal McKay knew enough about medical care costs that she skipped the ambulance ride after a car accident. A friend drove her to the emergency room.

That saved her one bill, but she faces another for more than \$20,000 after her ER visit. The 29-year-old Stockton, California, woman must balance paying her debt with getting care for a sprained shoulder that may need surgery: "I have to weigh the pros and cons. I'm already \$20,000 in debt, and any more treatment will just put me more in debt."

Uninsured at the time and facing a bill she doesn't know how to handle, McKay finds herself in a position familiar to many in her generation.

If she can't cover the cost, her bill may wind up in collections.

No matter your age or in-

surance status, there are ways to make medical debt more manageable, whether you just got the bill or it's already in collections.

### MEDICAL COLLECTIONS PEAK IN LATE 20s

Young adults incur medical collections debt at a higher rate than older age groups, according to a study published in Health Affairs, a health policy journal.

The report looked at 2016 data from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Consumer Credit Panel. It found that the frequency of medical debt in collections peaked at 11.3 percent, for people age 27, and stayed near that level until the mid-40s — even though medical spending in general is low for people in their 20s. The median amount in collections also peaked at age 27, at \$684. In contrast, people in their 60s had higher rates of medical spending but fewer medical collections.

That puts millennials —

those born 1981-1996 — in the crosshairs. "There are a number of things that add up that make younger adults more prone to this kind of debt," says economist Ben Ippolito, one of the study's authors.

Among them:

- Less earning power: Americans ages 25 to 34 had a median income of \$36,664 in 2017, according to the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey.

- Lack of insurance: Just under 20% of millennials in their late 20s and early 30s were uninsured, the highest rate seen in the Health Affairs report. □



In this Feb. 9, 2018, file photo, a nurse hooks up an IV to a flu patient at Upson Regional Medical Center in Thomaston, Ga.

Associated Press

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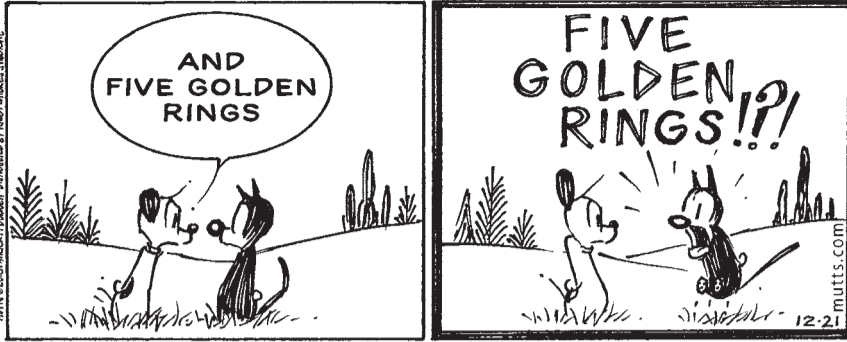
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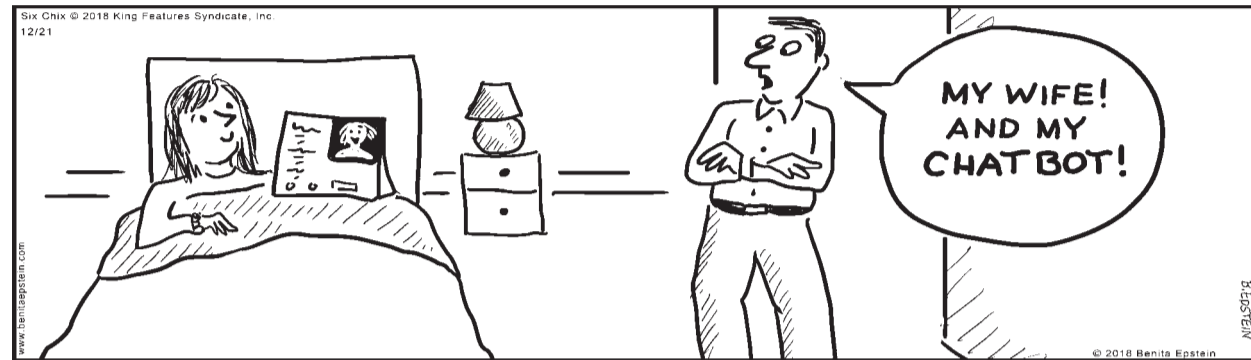
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**Mutts**

OKAY, SO FAR YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE OZZIE 4 CALLING BIRDS, 3 FRENCH HENS, 2 TURTLE DOVES, AND A PARTRIDGE IN A PEAR TREE?



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**Zits**



**Conceptis Sudoku**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 |   | 1 | 9 |   | 8 |
|   |   | 6 | 5 |   |   |
|   | 1 |   |   | 6 |   |
| 7 | 5 |   |   |   | 9 |
| 2 | 9 |   |   |   | 3 |
|   | 8 |   |   | 4 |   |
|   |   | 3 | 1 |   |   |
| 1 |   | 9 | 7 |   | 5 |

Difficulty Level ★★★★★ 12/21

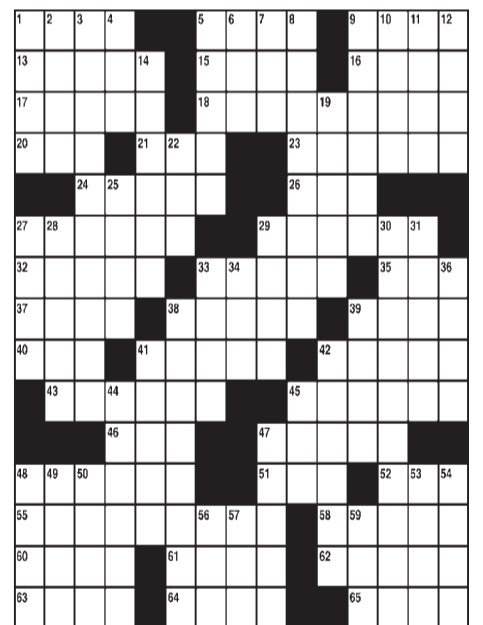
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 2 |
| 7 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 4 |
| 8 | 2 | 4 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| 6 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 |
| 3 | 5 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| 2 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| 5 | 3 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 6 |
| 9 | 8 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 8 |

**ACROSS**

- 1 State of mind
- 5 Lather
- 9 Upper limbs
- 13 "To \_\_\_ human; to forgive divine"
- 15 Candid
- 16 Jump
- 17 Licorice-like flavoring
- 18 Swing back and forth
- 20 Pug or poodle
- 21 Break a fast
- 23 Did a bartender's job
- 24 Hint at
- 26 Golfing term
- 27 Biblical book
- 29 Tendons
- 32 Prize
- 33 Gives the cold shoulder to
- 35 "If I \_\_\_ a Hammer"
- 37 Yarn
- 38 "\_\_\_ Low, Sweet Chariot"
- 39 Carpet thickness
- 40 Feel sick
- 41 Meanders
- 42 Begin a tennis game
- 43 Fat cat
- 45 Climbed
- 46 Shack
- 47 Fret
- 48 Sufficient amount
- 51 One \_\_\_ million; treasured friend
- 52 Two-\_\_\_; cheap
- 55 Uppity
- 58 Cost
- 60 Leave at a pawnshop
- 61 Robin's home
- 62 Tear up
- 63 Singles
- 64 Deep long cut
- 65 Chances



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews 12/21/18

2 TV's "Deal \_\_\_ Deal"

- 3 At first
- 4 Prefix for like or mount
- 5 Like a chimney flue
- 6 FedEx rival
- 7 Current calendar pg.
- 8 Making tiny cuts
- 9 Charm; attraction
- 10 Backside
- 11 Partner
- 12 Ran fast
- 14 Oozed
- 19 Bank offerings
- 22 \_\_\_-around; comprehensive
- 25 Deep mud
- 27 Facts & figures
- 28 Anticipate
- 29 NBA team
- 30 Helicopter
- 31 Ointment
- 33 The Ugly Duckling, in reality

**Thursday's Puzzle Solved**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| T | A | L | E | A | P | P | L | E | U | C | L | A |
| A | B | E | D | T | R | I | A | L | N | O | O | N |
| L | E | G | S | H | A | N | D | M | E | D | O | W |
| C | S | I | C | E | N | T | D | I | K | E | S |   |
|   | S | K | U | N | K |   | D | D | E |   |   |   |
| S | P | L | I | T | S |   | N | O | I | S | E | S |
| I | R | A | T | E | P | R | I | C | E | S | A | T |
| N | O | T | E | P | R | I | C | K | S | P | R | Y |
| G | O | S | L | O | P | E | C | H | E | A | P |   |
| F | R | A | C | A | S |   | G | A | U | C | H | E |
|   | B | O | Y |   | T | U | T | T | I |   |   |   |
| C | A | C | A | O | P | H | I | S | A | L | L |   |
| U | N | A | T | T | A | C | H | E | D | B | L | U |
| B | O | N | E | C | H | I | M | E | E | L | K | S |
| A | X | E | S | T | I | L | E | S | E | Y | E | S |

- 34 That fellow
- 36 Act
- 38 Comforting
- 39 Juicy fruit
- 41 Baton \_\_, LA
- 42 Bits and pieces
- 44 Connors & Norris
- 45 Family member
- 47 Distance across
- 48 Canyon sound
- 49 AM/PM divider
- 50 \_\_\_ more; again
- 53 Applied frosting
- 54 Kennedy & others
- 56 Afternoon social
- 57 Feminine suffix
- 59 Sorority letter

**DOWN**

- 1 Anthropologist Margaret

# Japan considers leaving IWC to resume commercial whale hunts

**TOKYO (AP)** — Japan is considering leaving the International Whaling Commission to resume commercial hunts, the Fisheries Agency said Thursday, after unsuccessfully campaigning for decades within the organization to gain support for the cause. The agency said officials haven't made a final decision but are considering the step. Japan's request for a resumption of commercial whaling was most recently denied at the IWC meeting in September. IWC imposed a moratorium on commercial whaling in the 1980s due to dwindling stocks. Japan has since switched to what it calls research whaling, and says stocks have recovered enough that commercial hunts should resume. Japanese officials have said the whaling organization is supposed to pursue sustainability but has become an anti-whaling body. They criticize what they call the whaling commission's lack of tolerance of diverse views on whaling and its inability to resolve the long divide between conservationists and supporters of whale use. If withdrawing, Japan has to notify IWC by Jan. 1, according to Kyodo News. The news was met with a mixed reaction in Japan. "I support a government decision" to withdraw, former Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera, who currently serves as adviser to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's fisheries committee, said in an interview with Japan's NHK television. "I have attended IWC meetings several times in the past, and I was struck by their extremely biased views," he said. "IWC has become a dysfunctional organization." Ruling party members, many of whom support resuming commercial whaling as part of Japan's traditional food culture, said

it's not helpful to stay in the IWC. But Masayuki Komatsu, a former fisheries official who represented Japan at IWC, questioned if Japan gains anything from withdrawing. "I doubt if a withdrawal improves the current situation," he told NHK. Japan has hunted whales for centuries. It has reduced its catch following international protests and declining demand for whale meat at home. Opponents say Japan's research whaling is a cover for commercial whaling because the whale meat is sold for food. Japan annually consumes about 5,000 tons of whale meat from the research hunts, mainly by the older generation who feel nostalgic about the meat. But critics say they doubt if a country with an aging and shrinking population can develop a sustainable whaling industry if it returns to commercial hunts. Many younger people don't see whales as food. Japan cut back on its catch after a 2014 international court ruling. Japan's Antarctic catch is now capped at 333 whales a year — about a third of the quota before a 2014 International Court of Justice ruling found that Japanese research whaling wasn't sufficiently scientific. □

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# U.S. urges doctors to write more Rx for overdose antidote

By CARLA K. JOHNSON  
AP Medical Writer

The U.S. government told doctors Wednesday to consider prescribing medications that reverse overdoses to many more patients who take opioid painkillers in a move that could add more than \$1 billion in health care costs.

Assistant Secretary for Health Brett Giroir, a doctor appointed by President Donald Trump, announced the guidance, saying it's important for doctors to discuss overdose dangers with patients.

Prescribing naloxone such as Narcan along with opioids forces a conversation that will lead to "a more informed decision by the patient," he said.

The action comes a day after a close vote from a Food and Drug Administration expert panel endorsing the idea of rewriting opioid drug labels to include a naloxone recommendation for many or all patients. An FDA document said such a move could add more than \$1 billion in health care costs.

"Even at a billion, it would



In this Tuesday, July 3, 2018 file photo, a Narcan nasal device which delivers naloxone lies on a counter as a health educator gives instructions on how to administer it in the Brooklyn borough of New York.

Associated Press

be an investment that is well worth it," Giroir said.

More than 47,600 Americans died of opioid overdoses last year, a toll that has been rising for two decades. The street drug fentanyl is the top killer today, but prescription painkillers are still a problem, contributing to nearly 15,000 overdose deaths last year.

Naloxone comes in a nasal spray, an injection and an automatic injector. The Narcan nasal spray costs about \$125 for a two-dose kit, although government programs can get it for less. The automatic injector can cost as much as \$4,000 per kit, although its maker recently authorized a cheaper generic version.

Critics said prescribing the antidote to pain patients does not address the growing share of fatal overdoses caused by illicit opioids, and could cause shortages for programs that hand out the kits to street drug users. It "will have the unintended consequence of derailing efforts to provide naloxone to the very effective

community programs we know are successful in saving lives," said Dr. Raeford E. Brown Jr., who heads an expert panel advising the FDA.

The new guidance tells doctors to consider prescribing the antidote to patients on high doses of opioids, heavy drinkers, people with sleep apnea and other breathing problems, people taking benzodiazepines such as Xanax and people with addiction or mental health problems. It expands upon a similar recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In April, U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams issued the office's first national public health advisory in 13 years, calling on more Americans to start carrying naloxone and urging more federal money to be dedicated to broadening access. Most states allow people to get naloxone from a pharmacy or community program under a statewide prescription and some states require doctors to also prescribe naloxone to patients on high doses of opioids. □



In this July 8, 2017 file photo, a woman with the World Wildlife Fund carries a paper mache replica of the critically endangered porpoise known as the "vaquita marina" during an event in front of the National Palace calling on the government to take additional steps to protect the world's smallest marine mammal, in Mexico City.

Associated Press

## Scientists lobby Mexico president over endangered porpoise

By MARK STEVENSON  
Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — A group of prominent scientists issued an appeal Wednesday to Mexico's new president, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, calling on him to take the unprecedented step of outlawing the possession of gill nets in the upper Gulf of California to save the critically endangered vaquita porpoise.

The vaquita is the world's smallest and most endangered porpoise, and lives only in the Gulf, also known as the Sea of Cortez. Experts say as few as 15 of the marine mammals remain in the wild, and none have ever been held in captivity. The vaquita has been driven to the brink of extinction by gill nets set illegally

to catch totoaba, a fish whose swim bladder commands astronomical prices and is considered a delicacy in China. Vaquitas become entangled in the totoaba nets and drown. While the Mexican government has banned the use of such nets in the vaquita's known range, the rule has been almost impossible to enforce.

So the scientists are calling in an open letter to Lopez Obrador's top environmental officials that the government ban possession of the nets in the whole area. The researchers also called for land patrols and inspections of boats setting out to sea to enforce the ban. At present, authorities patrol the area but poachers often flee in high-powered boats and make it to shore.

"This is the only practical option for effectively enforcing the law," wrote the scientists, who included experts like Barbara Taylor at the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Omar Vidal, formerly of the World Wildlife Fund.

The letter also called on the government "to protect the vaquitas that still remain," a daunting task but one that recent research suggests can still be accomplished. A voyage by researchers in late September sighted six or seven of the creatures, including a mother with a new calf.

"Your administration can save the vaquita and set an example for Mexico and the world," the scientists wrote to Lopez Obrador. □

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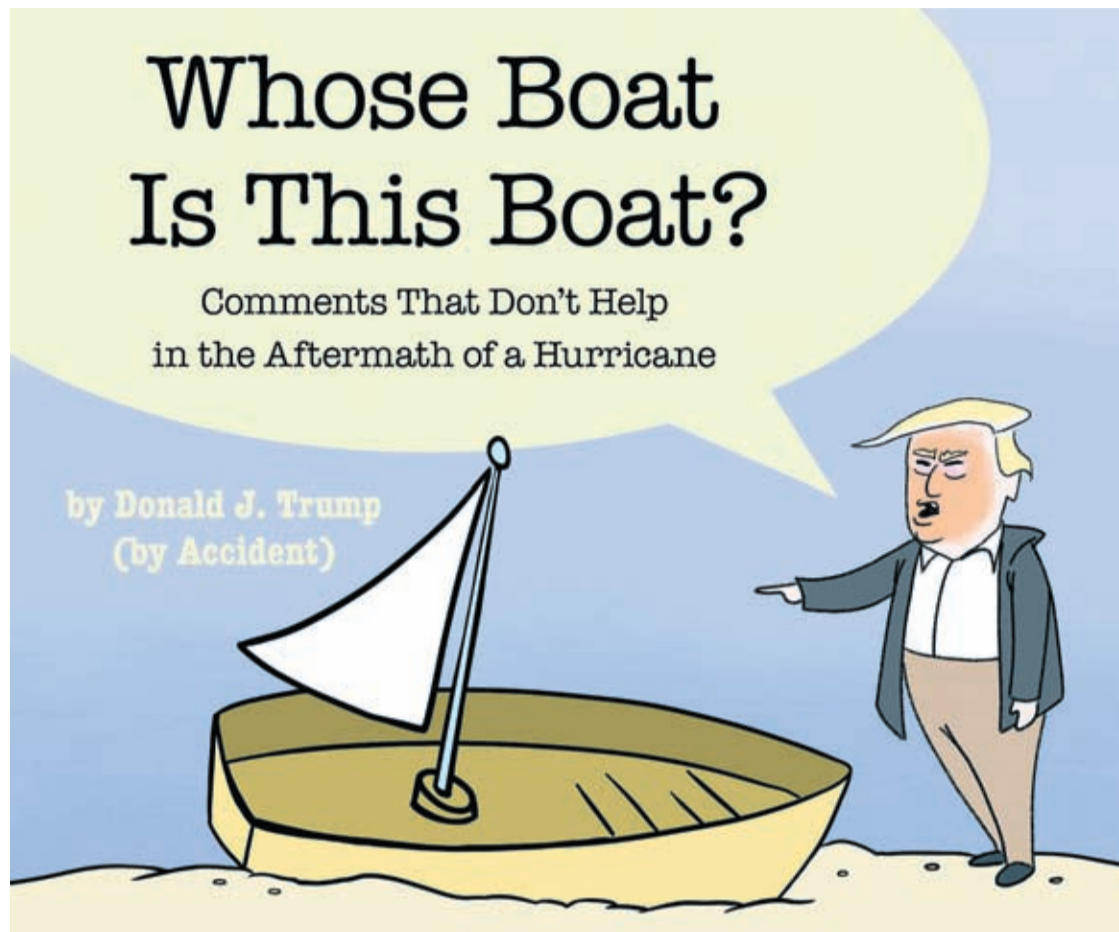
## Stephen Colbert: Trump spoof book 'Whose Boat' wrote itself

**NEW YORK (AP)** — For Stephen Colbert and his "Late Night" staff, the best-selling spoof "Whose Boat Is This Boat?" essentially wrote itself.

Because all of the words are by President Donald Trump, who is billed as the author "by accident." The picture book's title and contents were inspired by Trump's disjointed response last September to Hurricane Florence, which struck North Carolina and South Carolina, where Colbert grew up.

"If you love Trump, you'll love this book because every word in it is exactly what he said," Colbert, for whom the president has been prime comic material, said during a recent interview with The Associated Press. "And if you're anti-Trump you'll love this book because every word in it is exactly what he said."

"Whose Boat Is This Boat? Comments That Don't Help in the Aftermath of a Hurricane" has sold hundreds of thousands of copies and raised more than \$1.25 million for such charities as Foundation for the Carolinas and World Central Kitchen. The contributions come from author pro-



This cover image released by Simon & Schuster shows "Whose Boat Is This Boat?: Comments That Don't Help in the Aftermath of a Hurricane," by The Staff of The Late Show with Stephen Colbert. Associated Press

ceeds and from the publisher, Simon & Schuster. Books can take years from conception to publication, but "Whose Boat Is This Boat?" was essentially written in 24 hours and within six weeks was already on shelves, physical and vir-

tual. It began after Trump visited New Bern, North Carolina, and was preoccupied with a yacht that had landed in a resident's backyard.

"To see what we're seeing — this boat. I don't know what happened, but this

boat just came here," he said. Other comments included "At least you got a nice boat out of the deal" and "Have a good time!" "Late Show" staff writer Emmy Blotnick heard Trump's remarks and said, "That sounds like a chil-

dren's book."

With illustrations by Audro Buneta and John Henry, "Whose Boat Is This Boat?" looks like a bedtime story, albeit one that ends with the message "There is no moral." Defining it has proved challenging: On The New York Times best-seller charts, it appears under "Advice, How-to & Miscellaneous."

"We should be on the non-fiction list," Colbert said. "I smell a rat."

According to a Times spokesperson, "The book was placed on the advice, how-to and miscellaneous list where many books that defy easy categorization have ranked. It's a great achievement being on this highly competitive list for six weeks, including a week at No. 1, and we wish Stephen were happier about it."

Colbert said the book is for "children of all ages," one that appeals to kids because it's "pretty to look at, no nudity, no violence" and one that shows adults how "our president responds" to natural disasters. The book is billed as "an excellent teaching tool" that lets readers learn "about empathy by process of elimination." □

## Banksy's new artwork in Wales: A comment on air pollution?

**Associated Press**

**LONDON (AP)** — Street artist and social commentator Banksy has apparently popped up in Wales, leaving a new artwork on a garage in Port Talbot that references the town's air pollution.

A video posted to his official Instagram account on Wednesday afternoon had close-ups of the piece.

With the children's song "Little Snowflake" as a soundtrack, the video shows images painted on two garage walls that form a right angle. On one side, a child appears to be playing in the falling snow, sticking his tongue out for snowflakes. The other side reveals that the "snow" is actually falling ash and smoke from a fire in a dumpster.

The video then pans up to show the nearby Tata Steel plant, which looms over the Welsh town.

"They've not dropped a Banksy on us, have they?" a man asks on the video, which is captioned: "Season's greetings."

Rachel Honey-Jones, 33, who lives the other side of Swansea Bay, said an artist friend of hers was tipped off about the artwork's location and stayed overnight to guard it.

"It's amazing, an incredible addition to Port Talbot," Honey-Jones said.

The owner of the garage, Ian Lewis, 55, a steelworker for Tata Steel, said he first saw the piece when images spread on Facebook on Tuesday evening. He said Port Talbot was



An artwork by street artist and social commentator Banksy is seen on a garage in Port Talbot, Wales, Wednesday Dec. 19, 2018.

Associated Press

probably chosen for the Banksy work due to news headlines about the town's air pollution. In May, the

World Health Organization apologized after it admitted that figures identifying Port Talbot as the most

polluted town in the U.K. were wrong. It said Port Talbot's air pollution actually measured 9.6853 micrograms, just under half the figure it originally gave the town and below the World Health Organization guideline of 10 micrograms.

Still, black dust from the town's steelworks covered houses, cars and pets in July, a possible inspiration for the artwork.

Council workers erected metal fencing around the garage on Wednesday to protect the artwork.

"People have already taken sledgehammers to it and tried to throw paint on it," said Honey-Jones. "It will bring visitors and trade and tourism to the county, so it really does need to be protected." □

# 'Vice' is exhausting, but Bale's something to behold

By JOCELYN NOVECK  
Associated Press

Blow your nose, and you'll miss the split-second shot of a younger Donald Trump in "Vice," Adam McKay's exhaustingly entertaining (and entertainingly exhausting) Dick Cheney movie.

But make no mistake: the filmmaker wants us to be thinking about Trump. What he's telling us — implicitly, then more obviously — is that if you're upset today about what you might see as, say, a brazen executive-branch power grab, well, that already happened — and pretty recently. It's just that we didn't really notice because, McKay argues, Dick Cheney did it so darned quietly.

Let's pause a moment to note the obvious: "Vice," which features a terrifically committed performance by Christian Bale, is not a neutral biopic in any sense. It's more of a political lecture on steroids, using every clever filmmaking device up the talented McKay's sleeve, much like "The Big Short," his journey through



This image released by Annapurna Pictures shows Christian Bale as Dick Cheney, left, and Amy Adams as Lynne Cheney in a scene from "Vice."

Associated Press

the 2008 financial collapse. These devices include broken fourth walls, surreal vignettes, fun celebrity cameos, a mysterious narrator, and — best of all — Dick and Lynne Cheney in the bedroom, plotting his next political move, suddenly launching into iambic pentameter for several min-

utes. Macbeth much? The parallels with the Scottish play are obvious: McKay presents Lynne (Amy Adams, memorable as always) as the ideological force behind the man, her husband's private coach in every step he takes on the way to becoming a virtual co-president and perhaps the most powerful man on the planet.

But while Macbeth becomes wracked with guilt and paranoia, "Vice" chronicles a man with no guilt or doubt whatsoever, and that matter-of-fact certainty of purpose was indeed one of the reasons

he was able to climb so fast, McKay argues: He simply saw opportunities and took them.

The weakness here, though, is that we never get a sense of what truly drives Cheney the man. The shiny bells and whistles that McKay employs — because, well, he's good at it — detract from our ability to get to know his subject. Is McKay's Cheney merely an opportunist, or is he fueled by a deeper purpose, and how? It's not totally clear.

Although Cheney fans will likely not find much to appreciate here, that doesn't mean you need be a

committed liberal to enjoy "Vice." You can simply be an admirer of committed acting, the sort that Bale specializes in.

Yes, the actor famously gained a lot of weight, and mastered that way Cheney speaks from the side of his mouth. (There's also amazing makeup work here.) Alone, these would be gimmicks, but Bale also disappears so deeply into his balding, portly, pasty character that for long minutes you forget it's him.

As for Adams, her Lynne is bright, witty and gritty, a woman one imagines might have become a top politician herself had she been born a few decades later. Sam Rockwell has less screen time, but delivers a hilarious impression of George W. Bush, all folksy and jokesy. "Wanna jump on board?" he asks Cheney about the VP job. "Let's go, c'mon now!" Is it fair to portray Bush as such a man-child, motivated by pleasing his father, and so uninvolved in decisions? Perhaps not, but Rockwell is sure entertaining.

We first meet Cheney in 1963, staggering blind drunk from a car during a traffic stop. Fast forward to 9/11, and he's the guy taking charge of the nation's response, with Bush nowhere in sight. How did we get from A to B, McKay is asking? □

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|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <b>BUMBLEBEE</b><br>MON-THU 4:20   6:50   9:20<br>FRI 4:20   6:50   9:20   11:50<br>SAT 1:50   4:20   6:50   9:20   11:50<br>SUN 1:50   4:20   6:50   9:20<br>CXC<br>MON-FRI 6:40<br>SAT-SUN 1:20   6:40   |
|  | <b>SECOND ACT</b><br>MON-THU 4:20   7:10   9:30<br>FRI 4:20   7:10   9:30   11:50<br>SAT 2:30   4:20   7:10   9:30   11:50<br>SUN 2:30   4:20   7:10   9:30<br>CXC<br>MON-THU 5:45   8:15<br>FRI 5:45   8:15   10:45<br>SAT 3:15   5:45   8:15   10:45<br>SUN 3:15   5:45   8:15 |
|  | <b>AQUAMAN</b><br>WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES<br>MON-THU & SUN 4:55   7:50<br>FRI-SAT 4:55   7:50   10:45<br>CXC<br>MON-SUN 3:45   9:05<br>MON-THU 5:35   8:30<br>FRI 5:35   8:30   11:25<br>SAT 2:40   5:35   8:30   11:25<br>SUN 2:40   5:35   8:30                                 |
|  | <b>SPIDER-MAN</b><br>WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES<br>MON-FRI 4:10<br>SAT-SUN 1:40   4:10   |
|  | <b>RALPH BREAKS THE INTERNET</b><br>WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES<br>MON-FRI 5:05<br>SAT-SUN 2:40   5:05  |
|  | <b>CREED 2</b><br>WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES<br>MON-SUN 6:40   9:20  |
|  | <b>THE GRINCH</b><br>WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES<br>SAT-SUN 1:00   3:55   |

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## Peter Masterson, actor, writer and filmmaker, dead at 84



This undated image shows playwright, filmmaker and actor Peter Masterson.

Associated Press

**Associated Press**  
**NEW YORK (AP)** — Peter Masterson, the playwright, filmmaker and actor whose credits ranged from co-writing the Tony-winning musical "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" to directing the movie adaptation of "The Trip to Bountiful," has died. Masterson's son, also called Peter, says his father died Tuesday from complications from Parkinson's disease. He was 84 and died at his home in Kinderhook,

New York. Born Carlos Masterson, but known as Peter because his father preferred that name, Masterson often worked with family members. His cousin was playwright Horton Foote, who wrote the stage version of "The Trip to Bountiful." His wife, Carlin Glynn, won a Tony for "Best Little Whorehouse." His daughter, Mary Stuart Masterson, made her film debut in "The Stepford Wives," in which he starred as her father. □

## Obama says designer's energy informed her fashion choices

By NEKESA MUMBI MOODY  
NEW YORK (AP) — For Michelle Obama, choosing what designer to wear while she was in the White House involved many factors, from diversity to whether they were a nice person. Obama talked the decisions behind the outfits that made headlines during her time as first lady during a conversation with another fashion trendsetter, Sarah Jessica Parker, who was the moderator for the Wednesday night event for Obama's "Becoming" book tour.

During Obama's eight years as first lady, she became a powerful influence in fashion; she could wear a dress and it would sell out hours after she wore it.

Obama — who dressed in a gold wrap dress with above-the-knee gold sparkling boots for Wednesday's event — said she knew as a woman, her clothes



Former first lady Michelle Obama, left, is interviewed by Sarah Jessica Parker during an appearance for her book, "Becoming: An Intimate Conversation with Michelle Obama" at Barclays Center Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, in New York.

Associated Press

would be dissected and mentioned no matter how weighty the topic she was talking about. "I did know

that my clothes were making a statement, I knew that was the case," she said. "So we decided why don't we

use this platform to uplift some young new designers who normally wouldn't get this kind of attention,

because you can change their lives, which is one of the reasons why we chose Jason Wu for my inaugural gown." She also said Wu didn't expect it, unlike some big designers who felt as if they should have the honor. "You learn that there are people in this scene who feel entitled to these things because they've done it for a while, and I hated that feeling. There are whole lot of people out here who are trying to make it, there are young women and immigrants and black folk." Obama also said personal energy of a designer mattered. "I didn't want to wear the clothes of someone who didn't have a good spirit, and you could hear these things, you could hear how they treated my staff or how they treated their works, so everyone I wore as far as I knew had a good spirit as well," she said. □

## Lin-Manuel Miranda calls 'Mary Poppins' sequel role a dream

By JOHN CARUCCI  
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Working on "Mary Poppins Returns" put Lin-Manuel Miranda in a comfort zone, sort of.

The theater actor, composer and creator of the Broadway smash "Hamilton" knew the film's director, Rob Marshall, from such stage and screen credits as "Cabaret" and "Chicago." And he knew the work of the composers, Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman of "Hairspray" fame.

But there was one thing that didn't come naturally to Miranda, even if he's known as a musical theater pioneer — the choreography.

"I think the dancing was the most challenging aspect for me, because if you watch 'Hamilton' carefully, there's a lot of incredible dancing in there, Hamilton does almost none of it. He's standing and he's got a lot of words to say," Miranda said.

The learning curve was made a little easier thanks to the film's generous nine-



In this Nov. 28, 2018 photo, Lin-Manuel Miranda, a cast member in the film "Mary Poppins Returns," poses for a portrait at the Montage Beverly Hills in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Associated Press

week rehearsal period.

"What happens when you do that with the film company is, they become a company. We were a company of actors together by the time we were starting this journey," he said. "We all rehearsed together and that was formidable and

made me feel at home."

In the new film, Miranda plays Jack the lamp lighter opposite Emily Blunt's Mary Poppins. This time around he got to bring a completely different character to the table, one that's opposite from his stern and hard-charging Alexander

Hamilton.

"Hamilton's pretty different from Jack the lamp lighter. Hamilton's got no child-like innocence, whatsoever," Miranda said. Jack, on the other hand, is "sort of child-like — he's got this sense of wonder. He sort of never lost that."

Miranda said he'll be forever grateful that Marshall saw those traits in him.

"I make these movies because I think part of being an artist is being in touch with that inner child. That part of us that was drawing and painting and making stuff when we were kids. Some of us specialized on those, and some of us grow up, and I feel like I've never grown up in a real way," Miranda said.

Miranda won Tony Awards for "In the Heights" and "Hamilton," with the latter also earning him the Pulitzer Prize. He feels those successes set the stage for being cast in the "Mary Poppins" sequel.

"I've never done a movie on the scale. But there are very few movies on this scale," said Miranda, who recalled as a child watching Dick Van Dyke dance alongside animated penguins in "Mary Poppins."

"You know I grew up dancing along with those penguins in front of my TV like everybody else. It's just a dream," Miranda said. □

# What makes chickens happy? Nobody is quite sure

By **CANDICE CHOI**

Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — How do you measure a chicken's happiness? Is it in the way it runs for food? How much time it spends preening?

To size up what might make chickens happy in their brief lives, researchers at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, are putting 16 breeds through physical fitness and behavioral tests. They're watching how well birds scramble over a barrier for food, how skittish they seem and whether they play with a fake worm.

Chickens can't say how they feel, but playing with a fake worm may be a sign of happiness.

"We have to infer when an animal is happy or content or experiencing pleasure based on their behavior," said Stephanie Torrey, one of the researchers.

In recent years, the animal welfare world has moved beyond looking at how to minimize suffering to exploring whether animals can also enjoy their lives, Torrey said.

Such measures may be considered irrelevant by companies but underscore a broader lack of consensus around the welfare of chickens, which are sometimes slaughtered as soon as five weeks after hatching.

Animal welfare advocates say cruelty begins with birds that have been bred to have breasts so big they can barely walk. They say today's chickens are genetic monstrosities crippled by pain and that the industry needs to switch breeds. Many in the industry say there's no problem and that chickens may not move around a lot because they're sedentary. Even if they were to agree to change breeds, it's not clear what the alternatives should look like.

The two sides disagree about the cause and frequency of health issues among broilers chickens. Tyson and Sanderson Farms, for example, acknowledge that chicken breasts have ballooned over the years, but they say they're not



This Friday, Oct. 12, 2018 photo shows chickens under observation at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada.

Associated Press

seeing widespread problems as a result.

"If they can't move and get to the feed trough, they're not going to survive," said Mike Cockrell, chief financial officer for Sanderson Farms.

John Glisson of the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association says broiler chickens are "couch potatoes" and that some people may mistake the birds' laziness for a

medical issue. He said trying to assess welfare is tricky beyond established industry measures, like whether a chicken dies from disease before it's slaughtered.

The industry says changing breeds is unnecessary, and that switching to broiler chickens that don't grow as big or as fast would mean using up more water and other resources. Chicken prices at the supermarket

would be higher too.

Still, animal welfare is becoming a bigger public relations concern, and companies say they're always looking for ways to take better care of their chickens.

Tyson recently ran a trial that let chickens pick from pens with varying levels of light to determine which they prefer. Perdue is testing giving its conventional



In this Friday, Oct. 12, 2018 photo, researcher Stephanie Torrey stands over chickens under observation at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada.

Associated Press

birds as much light and space as its organic birds, which are the same breed. The Humane Society of the United States says stepping up living conditions helps, but it believes the bigger problem is breeding that has resulted in disfigured chickens. It says chickens have been genetically manipulated to have massive breasts their legs cannot support.

"It is crazy for anyone to have to remind the industry that birds naturally walk," said Josh Balk, the Humane Society's vice president of farm animal protection.

Balk said the study in Canada will provide important information on what type of chickens might suffer less. University of Guelph researchers are also tracking chicken traits like weight, growth rate and meat quality they hope will be useful to the industry. Aviagen and Tyson-owned Cobb, which supply breeds to chicken producers, are providing birds for the study, including breeds that are widely used.

The companies say they already track health and welfare, but that they're interested in the research.

The Guelph study is being funded by the Global Animal Partnership, which certifies corporate animal welfare standards. In 2016, it launched a campaign to get companies to switch to "slower growing" breeds. Since then, it has acknowledged that chicken welfare is more complicated than just growth rate.

It's now pushing for a "better" chicken, and hopes the study will help define what that entails.

Only a small percentage of chickens in the U.S. are GAP-certified, and spelling out new requirements for breeds risks making certification even rarer.

Anne Malleau, the group's executive director, notes some of the researchers' tests may seem far out. But she said providing "enrichments" — such as places where chickens can rest or perch — was also seen as a fringe idea before becoming more accepted. □